

The Seven Churches

A Study of the First Three Chapters
Of
The Book of Revelations



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The Book of Revelation

The Seven Churches

Chapter One Introduction

I. Title

The title comes from the first word in the letter, *apokalypsis*, and translated "revelation". From the Greek word comes the alternative title for the book: The Apocalypse. The Greek word itself means, "to expose that which was formerly hidden, veiled or secret". In the New Testament, it is used exclusively in the religious sense of a divine disclosure.

II. Author and Setting

A. Author

The author of Revelation identifies himself as John in 1:1, 4, 9 and 22:8. This seems reasonable, since the only other Johns we know about in the New Testament are John the Baptist and John Mark, neither of whom seems a likely candidate as the author, anymore than the suggestion that it was written by another, otherwise unknown person named John.

JUSTIN MARTYR [Dialogue with Trypho, p. 308] (A.D. 139-161) quotes from the Apocalypse, as John the apostle's work, the prophecy of the millennium of the saints, to be followed by the general resurrection and judgment. he says that "the Revelation had been given to John, one of the twelve apostles of Christ." This testimony of JUSTIN is referred to also by EUSEBIUS [Ecclesiastical History, 4.18].

MELITO, bishop of Sardis (about A.D. 171), one of the seven churches addressed, a successor, therefore, of one of the seven angels, is said by EUSEBIUS [Ecclesiastical History, 4.26] to have written treatises on the Apocalypse of John. The testimony of the bishop of Sardis is the more impartial, as Sardis is one of the churches severely reprov'd (Rev. 3:1).

THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH (about A.D. 180), according to EUSEBIUS [Ecclesiastical History, 4.26], quoted testimonies from the Apocalypse of John. EUSEBIUS says the same of Apollonius, who lived in Asia Minor in the end of the second century.

IRENÆUS (about A.D. 180), a hearer of POLYCARP, the disciple of John, and supposed by ARCHBISHOP USHER to be the angel of the Church of Smyrna, is most decided again and again in quoting the Apocalypse as the work of the apostle John [Against Heresies, 4.20.11; 4.21.3; 4.30.4; 5.36.1; 5.30.3; 5.35.2]. In [5.30.1], alluding to the mystical number of the beast, six hundred sixty-six (Rev. 13:18), found in all old copies, he says, "We do not hazard a confident theory as to the name of Antichrist; for if it had been necessary that his name should be proclaimed openly at the present time, it would have been declared by him who saw the apocalyptic vision; for it was seen at no long time back, but almost in our generation, towards the end of Domitian's reign." In his work Against Heresies, published ten years after Polycarp's martyrdom, he quotes the Apocalypse twenty times, and makes long extracts from it, as inspired Scripture.

TERTULLIAN, of North Africa (about A.D. 220), [Against Marcion, 3.14], quotes the apostle John's descriptions in the Apocalypse of the sword proceeding out of the Lord's mouth (Rev. 19:15), and of the heavenly city (Rev. 21:1-27). Compare On the Resurrection of the Flesh [27]; A Treatise on the Soul, [8, 9, &c.]; The Prescription Against Heretics, [33].

The MURATORI fragment of the canon (about A.D. 200) refers to John the apostle writing to the seven churches.

HIPPOLYTUS, bishop of Ostia, near Rome (about A.D. 240) [On Antichrist, p. 67], quotes Rev. 17:1-18, as the writing of John the apostle. Among HIPPOLYTUS' works, there is specified in the catalogue on his statue, a treatise "on the Apocalypse and Gospel according to John."

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (about A.D. 200) [Miscellanies, 6.13], alludes to the twenty-four seats on which the elders sit as mentioned by John in the Apocalypse (Rev 4:5); also, [Who Is the Rich Man Who Shall Be Saved? 42], he mentions John's return from Patmos to Ephesus on the death of the Roman tyrant.

ORIGEN (about A.D. 233), [Commentary on Matthew, in EUSEBIUS Ecclesiastical History, 6.25], mentions John as the author of the Apocalypse, without expressing any doubts as to its authenticity; also, in Commentary on Matthew, [16.6], he quotes Rev 1:9, and says, "John seems to have beheld the Apocalypse in the island of Patmos."

VICTORINUS, bishop of Pettau in Pannonia, who suffered martyrdom under Diocletian in A.D. 303, wrote the earliest extant commentary on the Apocalypse. Though the Old Syriac Peschito version does not contain the Apocalypse, yet EPHREM THE SYRIAN (about A.D. 378) frequently quotes the Apocalypse as canonical, and ascribes it to John.
Jamieson, Fauset and Brown Commentary

The big objection to apostolic authorship is that of the style of its Greek which is totally different to the style of Greek used in the gospel and epistles.

Similarities with the Gospel of John

Reference to the logos, John 1:1 cf. Rev 19:13
Imagery of the Lamb, John 1:29, 36 Rev 5:6 etc.
The water of life, John 4:10, cf. Rev 8:10, 21:6, 22:1, 22:17
He that overcomes, 1 John 2:13 cf. 2:7 etc., 21:7
Keeping the commandments, 1 John 2:3, cf. Rev 12:17, 14:12
Both have striking forms of Zech 12:10 (John 19:37; Rev 1:7)
An invitation to him who is thirsty, John 7:37 cf. Rev 21:6, 22:17
White clothing for angels, John 20:12 (although in Revelation angels wear shining cloths (15:6), the saints wear white (3:4, 5, 18, 6:11, 7:9, 19:14))
A commandment received by Christ from the Father, John 10:18
Other themes from the gospel:
The bride and the bridegroom (John 3:29 cf. Rev 19:7)
True worshippers (John 4:23 cf. Rev 11:1)
The dead will the voice of God will rise to live... will rise to be condemned (John 5:25-29 cf. Rev 20:11 ff.)
For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all he does (John 5:20 cf. Rev 1:1)
... I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day (John 6:39 cf. Rev 7:4, 14:1)
My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me (John 7:16 cf. Rev 1:1)
The testimony of two is valid (John 8:17 cf. Rev 11:3)
... he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44 cf. Rev 12:15, 20:8)
before Abraham was born , I am (John 8:58 cf. Rev 1:17-18)
The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy (John 10:10 cf. Rev 9:11)
I am the good shepherd (John 10:11 cf. Rev 8:17)
The man who loves his life will lose it, but the man who hates it will keep it for eternal life (John 12:25 cf. Rev 2:10)
Whoever serves me must follow me (John 12:26 cf. Rev 14:4)
The voice of God sounding like thunder (John 12:28-29)
 The prince of this world will be driven out (John 12:31 cf. 12:9)
 I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am (John 14:3, cf. 22:3)
 If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first (John 15:18)
 ... anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God (John 16:2)
 the prince of this world now stands condemned (John 16:11, cf. 12:12)
 you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices (John 16:20 cf. 11:10)
 In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33 cf. Rev 3:21)
 Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name (John 17:11 cf. Rev 7:4, 14:1)
 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world (John 17:14 cf. Rev 6:9).
 I want those you have given to me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory (John 19:15 cf. Rev 21:23)
 They will look on the one they have pierced (John 19:37 cf. Rev 1:7)
 I am returning to.... my God and your God (John 20:17 cf. Rev 3:2, 3:12)

Similarities with John's first epistle

Overcoming the evil one (1 John 2:14)
Overcoming the antichrist (1 John 4:4)
Overcoming the world (1 John 5:4)
Do not love the world or anything in the world (1 John 2:15)
The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever (1 John 2:17)
The last hour and the antichrist (1 John 2:18, 2:22, 4:3)
Do not be surprised if the world hates you (1 John 3:13)
I write these things to you who believe... so you may know you have eternal life (1 John 5:13)
The evil one cannot harm the one born of God (1 John 5:18)
The whole world is under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19)
Keep yourselves from idols (1 John 5:21)
Continue in him, so that when he appears we may be unashamed before him at his coming (1 John 2:28)

Similarities with John's second epistle

Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist (2 John 1:7)
Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for so that you may be rewarded fully (2 John 1:8 cf. Rev 3:11).

Other similarities

- John is the only gospel to refer to a spear thrust into Christ's side (Rev 1:7 cf. John 19:34).
- John is the only one to use the word 'tabernacle' (dwelling) *Skenoo* (4 times in Revelation see 21:3) and John 1:14.
- He calls Jesus the *Logos* Rev 19:13 cf. John 1:1, 1 John 1:1.

The language and grammatical style of Revelation are different from what one finds in the Gospel of John and his three letters; however the imagery, literary forms, liturgical framework and symbolism bear a resemblance to what one finds in the other works attributed to John. Perhaps the differences in language and style can be explained because of the difference in the theme involved. While the Gospel was a gospel of love, Revelation was judgemental and jarring to John's sentiment.

Apostle John

The disciple whom Jesus loved, one of the Twelve Apostles, traditional author of the fourth Gospel, three letters, and the Book of Revelation. In the Gospels he and his brother, St. James (the Greater), are identified as sons of Zebedee; Jesus called them Boanerges or Sons of Thunder. The two brothers, together with Peter, were the three apostles closest to Jesus; they witnessed the Transfiguration and accompanied Jesus to Gethsemane. John has been thought to have been the disciple "whom Jesus loved. Jesus, in his dying moments, committed Mary to John's care. John took Mary with him when he moved to Ephesus. He is mentioned occasionally in the Acts of the Apostles, and Paul refers to him in Galatians. According to 2d-century authorities John died at an advanced age at Ephesus (c.A.D. 100). His symbol as evangelist is an eagle.

B. Date

It is difficult to be precise on the date of the book of Revelation. Dates of composition of either AD 54-68 or AD 81-96 seem most likely. It was written c.A.D. 95 on Patmos Island off the coast of Asia Minor by an exile named John, in the wake of local persecution by the Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96).

The first Christian writer to refer expressly to the Revelation was Justin Martyr (c. AD. 140). The first known commentary on it was written about AD. 170 by Melito of Sardis, the church in his city being one of the churches mentioned in the Apocalypse. Cyprian of Carthage, about the middle of the 3rd century highly honored the Apocalypse, while Eusebius of Caesarea (died c. AD. 340) was not sure about its authenticity, but permitted its reading. Gregory of Nazianzus (died AD. 389) published a list of NT books omitting the Revelation as did Cyril of Jerusalem (died AD. 386). It was not until the "Easter Letter" of Athanasius in AD. 367 that the 27 books now composing the NT were all mentioned together as canonical.

Arguments for Late Date:

The consensus date is around AD. 95 during the reign of Domitian (81-96), some gives an early date during Nero's reign 54-68. During Domitian's reign emperor worship became widespread. Domitian was in the habit of banishing his enemies, whereas Nero was not, his persecution was local to Rome. Domitian's policy was legal and ore widespread. John was released from Patmos on Domitian's death. He tells us that he was on Patmos, suffering because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (1:9). It should be noticed that John was told to write what he had seen and send it to the seven churches (1:11, cf. 1:19). Thus he wrote this book on Patmos and sent it to the churches, presumably before his release. That Ephesus had lost its first love and Sardis was dead both points to a late date.

Revelation was clearly written in a time of persecution (Morris):

1. Antipas had been killed (2:13).
2. John was exiled to Patmos because of his faith (1:9).
3. The church in Smyrna was about to suffer including imprisonment (2:10).
4. There are the souls slain because of the word of God and their testimony (6:9).
5. The woman is drunk with the blood of the saints (17:6).

What is also clear is that the majority of the NT will have been written by the time Revelation was written. Both Paul and Peter died during Nero's reign. John makes use of both OT and NT sources in Revelation.

Compare the date that Revelation was written with the dates that other books in the Bible were written:

Romans AD 57

2 Tim: during the reign of Nero 54-68 Paul was martyred after the big fire of Rome in 64.

2 Peter: Peter was martyred during reign of Nero < 68

James: 50s or early 60's

Hebrews: before the destruction of the temple in AD 70.

Acts: AD 63.

Luke: AD 59-63 or 70's or 80's

Mark: AD 50's or 60's or before AD 70.

Matthew: AD 50's to 70's

John: Late in first century

Revelation itself shows that John wrote the book while he was receiving the visions. While the repeated commands: 'Write!' in 1:19, 14:13, 19:9 might leave the question open as to just when John was to do this writing, John's own statement in 10:4, informs us that he was about to write but was forbidden by the angel for writing what the seven thunders said. John is to write 'into a book' (1:11); in 22:6-19 we see 'this book' completed save for the last few sentences. The angel (22:7-15) and Jesus (22:18,19) speak of 'this book' as one that has already been written, see 22:19. It is therefore, incorrect to think that John wrote in Patmos some time after he saw these visions or waited even until he returned to Ephesus. Lenski also points out that this does present John as writing in 'excitement' because he was in the spirit (1:10, 4:2, 17:3, 21:10), but rather, John's mental faculties were in no way disturbed; on the contrary, they were stimulated, exalted, and functioned with perfection.

Arguments for an Early date: (Chilton and Gentry)

'Before Jerusalem Fell

If an early date is proposed (c AD 64) then most of the judgment visions in Revelation (chs 4-19) could easily be applied to the historical turmoil which came to a head shortly after John wrote. The fulfillment of the majority of its prophecies would then apply to the very beginning of Christianity, rather than to its conclusion. Contained in Revelation might be prophetic allusions to the first Roman persecution of Christianity (AD 64-68), the Jewish war with Rome (AD 67-70), the death of Christianity's first persecutor (Nero Caesar, AD 68), the Roman Civil Wars (AD 68-69), and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (AD 70). Revelation takes it to be a prophecy about the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The main argument for an early date are as follows:

1. Thematic evidence: (Rev 1:7 NIV) Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. 'those who pierced him' and 'peoples of the earth' refer to the first century Jews.
'When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies' (Luke 21:20-24). The coming of Christ in 1:7 refers to his coming in judgment upon the Jews in AD 66-70.
In Mat 24:1-2 Jesus refers to the destruction of the temple, in Mat 24:30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory".

In Mat 24:34 Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened." This is the preterist view which sees Mat 24:30 referring to the coming in judgment against Jerusalem rather than the bodily second coming of Christ.

2. Political evidence: the sixth king of Rev 17:9-10 who reigns now is Nero.
3. Architectural evidence: Identifies the temple of 11:1-2 with Herod's temple in Jerusalem. c.f. Luke 21:24 Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
4. Ecclesiastical evidence: The fact that it is the Jews who are troubling the seven churches (2:9, 3:9) is strong evidence of an early date since after AD 70 the few Jews left alive after the destruction of Jerusalem were dispersed among the nations. Acts is full of illustrations of Jewish persecution of Christianity.
5. Historical evidence: this evidence is surveyed and shows that the evidence of Irenaeus is not overwhelming

Canonicity Problems

Perhaps no single book in the New Testament presents so many and so formidable problems as the Apocalypse of John. These difficulties concern the authorship, the date, the apocalyptic method, the relation to the other Johannine books, the purpose, the historical environment, the reception of the book in the New Testament canon, the use and misuse of the book through the ages, etc. In the eastern churches the recognition of the Apocalypse of John was slower than in the west, since it was not in the Peshitta Syriac Version. Caius of Rome attributed the book to Cerinthus the Gnostic, but he was ably answered by Hippolytus, who attributed it to the Apostle John. The Council of Laodicea (about A.D. 360) omitted it, but the third Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) accepted it. The dispute about millenarianism led Dionysius of Alexandria (middle of the third century, A.D.) to deny the authorship to the Apostle John, though he accepted it as canonical. Eusebius suggested a second John as the author. But finally the book was accepted in the east as Hebrews was in the west after a period of doubt. (Robertsons word Picture)

Poor State Of The Text

There are only five uncials that give the text of John's Apocalypse (Aleph A C P Q).

Of these Aleph belongs to the fourth century, A and C to the fifth, Q (really B2, B ending with Heb 9:13, both in the Vatican Library) to the eighth, P to the ninth.

Only Aleph A Q (=B2) are complete, C lacking Rev 1:1, 3:19-5:14, Rev 7:14-17, 8:5-9:16, 10:10-11:3, 14:13-18:2, 19:5-21, P lacking Rev. 16:12-17:1, 19:21-20:9, 22:6-21.

Both C and P are palimpsests. In the 400 verses of the book "over 1,600 variants have been counted" (Moffatt).

Erasmus had only one cursive (of the twelfth century numbered Ir) for his first edition, and the last six verses of the Apocalypse, save verse 20, were a translation from the Vulgate.

The result is that the versions are of special importance for the text of the book, since in no single MS. or group of MSS. do we have a fairly accurate text, though Aleph A C and A C Vulgate are the best two groups. (RWP)

C. Interpretive Approaches

If the contents of the Book of Revelation are taken to be a woven tapestry of *signs and symbols*, then their decoding must be internally consistent, the decoding must use definitions derived for them in the context of the tapestry itself, that is to say the signs and symbols contained within the tapestry are *self-defining*. Verification of the correct decoding of the signs and symbols must also be found in the other books of the Bible, as the mythological and allegorical conventions of the Scriptures issue from or are part of the continuity, which we call the "*Judeo-Christian*" tradition. Some extraneous information from our knowledge of the *Nature*, and from the *History* must of necessity be employed for the complete successful decoding of the Book, and this is unavoidable.

1. Futurist

With the exception of chapters one through three, the book of Revelation is to be understood as describing the period around the Second Advent of Jesus Christ and the end of the age. The seals, the bowls, the trumpets, the plagues refer to events yet to be. The beasts of chapters thirteen and seventeen relate to the coming Antichrist. Antichrist will arise just before the end of all things, and then Jesus will arrive, defeat him, and set up his earthly millennial kingdom.

It is the viewpoint held by early expositors such as Justin Martyr (died AD 165), Irenaeus (died about AD 195), Hippolytus (died AD 236) and Victorinus (died about AD 303). Today, it is the most popular view among evangelical Christians.

2. Historicist

An interpretation that apparently began with Joachim of Floris who died in 1202. In his view, the book was a prophesy of the events of Western history from the times of the apostles until the end of time. Generally, the papacy is viewed as the Antichrist. This interpretation was popular with the early reformers Luther and Calvin.

It is not a popular point of view today, principally because of a lack of consensus among various exegetes as to the historical identification of the various events in the book.

3. Idealist

An interpretation, which takes Revelation as basically poetic, symbolic and spiritual. The book of Revelation does not predict any specific historical events, but rather simply sets forth the timeless truths concerning the battle between good and evil that rages throughout the church age. The approach is similar to the general allegorizing principles of interpretation used during the middle ages; it is not a particularly widely held viewpoint today, again because of its general subjectivity and lack of consensus among exegetes.

4. Preterist

An interpretation, which sees Revelation as related to what happened during the time, it was written. The main contents of chapters four through at least nineteen are viewed as describing events that happened during the times of the Roman Empire, either during the lifetime of John or shortly thereafter; the book of Revelation is then seen as belonging to the genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature, designed as a "tract for the times" to encourage faithfulness during persecution. Only chapters nineteen through twenty-two are viewed as still future in our day.

The beasts of chapters thirteen and seventeen are identified with imperial Rome and the imperial priesthood.

The interpretation was apparently first developed about 1614 by the Spanish Jesuit Alcasar. This is the view held by the majority of scholars today.

Chapter Two

REVELATION 1

THE UNVEILING OF RESURRECTED CHRIST

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants; things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near." Rev 1:1 -3

The Greek word translated "revelation" here is apocalypse which means "unveiling" or "uncovering". A new portrait of Jesus is being unveiled before man.

It is the same word that is used in 2 Thessalonians 1:7b-8

Gospel presents Jesus as the "the Lamb of God", the "meek and lowly" one who was appointed for sacrifice for the sins of the world; the one who went quietly to the cross like a sheep to the slaughter.

But here in Revelation Christ is shown to be a different person. He is the "Lion of the tribe of Judah", the judge of the living and the dead.

Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him. This refers to the events of the second coming which according to Matthew 24:36 ..."But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only." But after the resurrection Jesus told them Acts 1:7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

John says that the Revelation came from the Father to the Son who in turn has given it to his servants

"things which must shortly come to pass". 2 Peter 3:8 ...

"But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

"sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John

"Saw" Revelation is his eyewitness testimony.

blessing on all who "read" or "hear" and "keep"

Rev 1:4-6 "John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

To Him who loves us and freed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us a kingdom and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

These "seven churches" were located in Asia Minor which is the present day Turkey.

Salutation from

1. God the Father - Him who is and who was and who is to come,
2. The seven spirits - who is before his throne
3. Jesus Christ - faithful witness, first born from the dead, ruler over the kings of the earth.

"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep"

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,"

John breaks out into praise.

Rev 1:7-8 "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'

Coming with clouds

"every eye will see Him, even they that pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him".

"...I put you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God!" Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Matthew. 26:63b-64.

"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn." "And one will say to him, 'What are these wounds between your arms?' Then he will answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.'" Zechariah 12:10; 13:6

Will all the Jews come alive to see the second coming? Because of this statement some interpreters believe that the early church believed that Jesus would come back within their life. Otherwise how will this be fulfilled literally? Is it only a figurative way of saying – even the Jews will echo Zechariah?

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Second Coming would take place "after the tribulation of those days". We need to tuck that important detail away in our memory banks.

"The clouds of heaven".

"I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Daniel 7:13-14

"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." First Thessalonians. 4:17a

What are these "clouds"?

Shekinah Glory

The cloud is the believers. Heb 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses,

"I am Alpha and the Omega".

Rev 1:9-11 "I, John, your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, 'What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.'"

Patmos (Derived from luxuriant palm groves - Palmosa – Greek translation of Kerala) of today combines touching religious atmosphere with vigorous cosmopolitan life. It is dominated by the monastery - a magnificent Medieval Fortress- in which sacred relics, a Library and some really unique manuscripts can be found. We can also find there the cave in which Saint John the Apostle wrote the Apocalypse.



“ At the time when John wrote Revelation he was in exile on the rocky island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Turkey. He had been the pastor of the church at Ephesus just across the water and inland a ways from his island prison. John says that he was out there for the “word of God”.

, “for the testimony of Jesus Christ”. In other words because of his speaking and preaching about Christ.

I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day”. , “in the spirit”, to say that was how he was caught up into heaven. The Apostle Paul recounted a similar experience when he too was taken up to heaven (2 Corinthians 12: 2). There, he says that he couldn’t tell if he was in his body or out of it.

“The Lord’s day” is a term coined by the first century church to designate Sunday, their day of worship. It fell on the first day of the week. The Church adopted that day for their worship because it was the day that Jesus arose from the dead. They celebrated it in opposition to the Jewish Sabbath which was on Saturday.

“what you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches”.

Seven churches—As there were many other churches in Proconsular Asia (for example, Miletus, Magnesia, Tralles), besides the seven specified, doubtless the number seven is fixed upon because of its mystical signification, expressing totality and universality. The words, “which are in Asia” are rejected by the oldest manuscripts, A, B, C, CYPRIAN, Vulgate, and Syriac; Coptic alone supports them of old authorities. These seven are representative churches; and, as a complex whole, ideally complete, embody the chief spiritual characteristics of the Church, whether as faithful or unfaithful, in all ages. The churches selected are not taken at random, but have a many-sided completeness.

Rev 1:12-16”Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.”

Whirling about to see who had spoken with such majesty and authority, John found himself looking upon a scene and personage extraordinaire! Let’s examine it.

First, he found himself gazing upon “seven golden lampstands”. The Greek word here for lampstands is *luxnias*.

"One like the Son of Man".

Certainly who John saw was human but not just any human for this was the "Man" from Daniel's vision in Daniel 7, whose exact title John uses.

"I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him." Daniel 7:13

This title is a well-recognized name for Messiah and emphasizes Christ's humanity. When the "Son of Man" came and lived among us he took upon himself flesh. He truly became one of us. As you have it in Hebrews 2:14, 16-17... "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil," "For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

Luke is the gospel that emphasizes Christ's humanity. There, Jesus repeatedly refers to himself as the "Son of Man"....
"for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10

I saw seven golden candlesticks. The first things seen when he turned to see whence the voice came were the seven golden candlesticks, which symbolized the churches (Rev. 1:20).

And in the midst. It is a beautiful thought that he who said "I will be with you always" is represented as moving in the midst of the church.

Like unto the Son of man. A term used in Dan. 7:13 and applied by the Savior to Himself, but never applied to him by the New Testament writers except here, Rev. 14:14 and Act. 7:56.

A garment down to the foot. The long robe of a high priest girt about with the golden girdle of a king. Hebrews 5:6 ... "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

"girded about the chest with a golden band - King of the Jews. "King of kings" that Daniel saw in Daniel 7:14 ... "Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."

His head and his hair were white. White is the color of purity and of triumph. The idea here is not age but heavenly glory. The Ancient of Days.

His eyes were as a flame of fire. Bright, piercing, all seeing, flashing light, and also a consuming fire of the wicked. "Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?" says the LORD; "do I not fill heaven and earth?" says the LORD." Jeremiah 23:24

A Hebrews 4:13..."And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

Feet like unto fine brass. Shedding forth splendor like burnished brass heated in a furnace. These feet speak of judgment. "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him." John 5:22-23

His voice. His voice was mighty like the sound of surging waters. Waters represents people and nations. The voice that is the voice of all mankind. "The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders; the LORD is over many waters. the voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. Waters signify nations. Water of Holy Spirit and Word

In his right hand seven stars. "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches" (Rev. 1:20).

And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. This two-edged sword is a symbol of the word by which Christ's conquests are won. See Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12, and compare Rev. 19:15. Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Ephesians 6: 17..."And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;"

His countenance. The glory of his countenance is the same that was manifested at the Transfiguration. (Matthew 17 and Mark 9),

First Timothy 6:15 -16, says..."... He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen."

Rev 1:17-20 "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.' I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."

John was Jesus' cousin and his beloved disciple. He had all the freedom during the period of ministry even to lean against Jesus and ask him a personal question during the Last Supper. John had never seen Jesus in this manner (except probably at the transfiguration) His reaction was to fall down and worship.

Jesus now announces his true divine identity.

Isaiah 44:6 ... "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; besides me there is no God.'"

"I and my Father are one."

Jesus now explains the purpose of his incarnation and the result thereof: "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death". Jesus has conquered death so that he can redeem mankind and redeem the whole creation in that process.

"Write the things which you see, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this". You might say this is Christ's outline of the book. It is as follows:

"... the things which you see

- "... the things which are" Chapters 2-3 Present church age.. the seven churches
- "... the things which will take place after this" Chapters 4 - 22 future

Interpretation of the Seven Lampstand

"the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. And the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches". Let's consider each of these symbols and our Lord's explanation separately.

The word "angels" in the Greek is angeloi.

Each of the letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3, begin with the words "unto the angel of the church at (such and such) write".

"angel" simply means "messenger" It would simply mean "To the messenger of the church at write", etc. In this context it would refer to the pastor-teacher – elder of these churches

Ephesians 4:11 ... "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,"

The "lampstands" represent the seven churches themselves.

Philippians 2:15-16a, says ... "that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, ..."



Chapter Three

EPHESUS

Rev. 2:1-7

Rev 2:1 To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks:
Rev 2:2 I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false;
Rev 2:3 and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary.
Rev 2:4 But I have *this* against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love.
Rev 2:5 Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.
Rev 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
Rev 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

The name Ephesus means "desirable, full purposed or the city of the moon".

It is situated on the sea coast and was the center of a flourishing sea trade acting as the center of the traffic between East and West. It was a big city governed by itself. It was also a religious center having the famous temple of Artemis which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Goths destroyed it in AD 262 along with the entire city. Artemis is the Greek name for the moon goddess Diana of Rome. Sometimes she is represented as being covered with breasts, a symbol of fertility, lasciviousness and sexuality. As a prominent Roman city it was also the center of regular pageantry and held shows and arena combats and fights. The temple of Artemis was an imposing structure over a large area of several acres of land housing everything from a market place to sex trade. It was an asylum for criminals. It was a market place excelling any supermarkets, where one can find anything. Heraclitus, the great philosopher who lived in that city calls it "Asia's foremost city" and declared that "one cannot live in this city without continually weeping over its immorality". In the midst of this was a church.

Paul, Appolos, Priscilla Aquilla and John were the early builders of this church in Ephesus. A revealing description of the city and its background can be found in Acts 19 where Paul is seen preaching. This was John's home town to his end where he returned from Patmos and died a natural death..

Jesus introduces himself as:

Rev 2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:

The seven stars are the future of the church. Jesus holds the seven stars in his hands. He is the guardian of all these churches. He is the Lord of these churches.

Rev 2:2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.

Rev 2:3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

Rev 2:4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.

He commends them for their active orthodoxy, their toil, patience and intolerance of evil and opposition to false doctrines. In the process of building up a church they lost their first love - the depth and desire was lost. In the process of building an institutional church capable of withstanding the ongoing evil they lost their priorities - Jesus was not given the prominence. The superstructure was built up. We can see this even today in the growth of any church. When the church begins the people are so enthusiastic and filled with love for each other and the life of the church is centered on Jesus. As time went on legalism and superstructures became necessary and eventually they missed the centrality of Jesus and remained as an edifice of structure at the building level and the social level.

Rev 2:5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.

The reinstatement consists of three parts:

Remember Repent Do

All conversions have these three parts.

Remember your past. Repent of your mistakes. Turn around and actively practice.

In the conversion of a sinner to saint these three steps are necessary.

Know you are a sinner. Repent of your sin.

Accept Jesus as savior and actively confess him with your lips.

The reinstatement of broken family relation is likewise comes in three steps.

Remember your honeymoon period Repent or desire to get back

Change your ways.

This is the prescription of Jesus for today's broken relationships not only with him but also within the family and the community as a whole.

Rev 2:6 But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Nicolaitan heresy is an extreme form of Gnosticism which was rampant during the Apostolic Age. They taught that, since their bodies were physical, it did not matter what the body did. So they resorted to indiscriminate sexual relations and did whatever they liked with their bodies. Irenaeus reports that the sect was so called because their leader was Nicolaos. Sex is even today a potential danger of close loving Christian communities. We can foresee the growth of cults like the Children of God and others in the Nicolaitan teachings.

This name has another meaning. Nico means ruler. So Nicolaitan would mean ruler of the laity. Hence this may indicate the growth of clergy in the church. The rise of the Priesthood in Christianity is a copy of the Priesthood in the Roman pagan religion. These cultural traditions were mixed with Aaronic Priesthood and was readopted into the institutional churches. There is nothing wrong in the adoption of cultural setup into Christian Institutionalization as long as it does not produce a basic contradiction in the theological basis of Christian faith. In this case as time went on clergy slowly became the rulers and took over spiritual authority in contrast to the royal priesthood of all believers. This essentially is the difference of opinion of evangelicals with the orthodox and Roman Catholicism.

1 Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Jesus reminds them of their honey moon period, when all was sunshine and joy and exciting. Return and do the first works was his advise.

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

This is true of the love of husband and wife also. With love, marriage becomes a heaven. It is verily a tree of life and a paradise. If this is true of earthly marriage how much more is it true of spiritual love. It is this marriage between the church and Jesus that is going to bring forth the tree of life and paradise. In fact paradise is where love is. Hell is where hate is, where selfishness is. The hell and heaven are decided on the basis of relationships and not on the basis of a place somewhere or material possessions. Satre has vividly described heaven and hell as identical banquet halls. Banquet is spread over the table and people sit around it. But they all have long spoons and forks tied to their arms. In the hell they found it impossible to feed themselves and they all starved. They cursed and screamed and were famished. In the heaven the situation is the same. But they were well fed and nourished because in their love they fed each other. Love is the key to heaven. Marriage in human society is the foretaste of the great marriage of Church with Jesus.

History tells us that Ephesus did get back for a while and was commended for their brotherly love by Ignatius in the second century. But they did not stay there. In AD 262 Goths destroyed the city. A council of Bishops were held in Ephesus in AD 431 which ratified the council of Nicea. But Christianity fell at the onslaught of Islamic invasion. Turks followed Arabs and finally came the Mongols in 1403. Today the city's once famous sea port is only a marsh, covered with reeds. The village has a few Christians who do not know Paul, Peter or John. The candlestick was removed.

Rev 2:5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

This church describes the state of affairs of the Apostolic era from AD 30 to AD 100. John died in AD 100. This is the period also described in the parable of the Sower. The word was sown and it encountered real physical situations. Some yielded 100, some 60 and some 30 fold.

The Tree of Life What is the Tree of Life?

The phrase occurs only 11 times in the Bible out of which 4 are from Proverbs. And 3 from Genesis and 4 from Revelations.

(Gen 2:9 NIV) And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

(Gen 3:22 NIV) And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."

(Gen 3:24 NIV) After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

(Prov 3:18 NIV) She (Wisdom) is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed.

(Prov 11:30 NIV) The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.

(Prov 13:12 NIV) Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

(Prov 15:4 NIV) The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit. (Rev 2:7 NIV) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

(Rev 22:2 NIV) down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

(Rev 22:14 NIV) "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

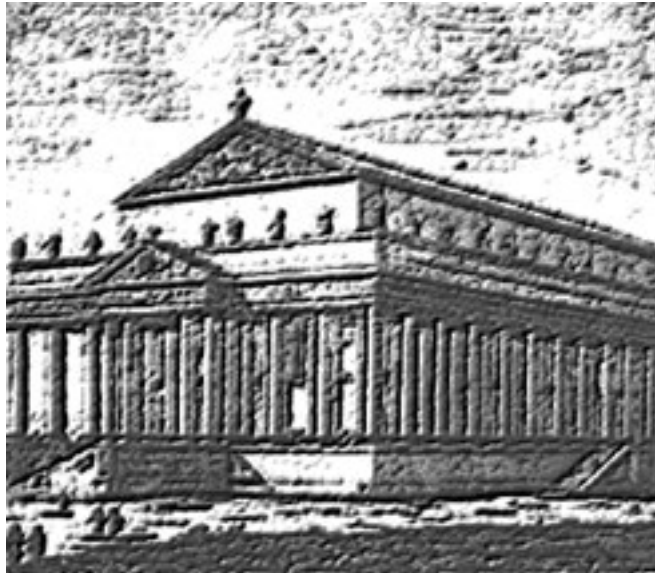
(Rev 22:19 NIV) And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Tree of life is a state of existence which is the result of total healing – redemption. And is an ongoing process of healing. Evil is still possible but are dealt with. Thus we are led back to the Garden of Eden. After having tasted the Tree of the Good and Evil we have been redeemed back into the the original state in the presence of God as one of the Trinity –as partakers in the divine nature. Some early fathers did think that the free will and evil that ensued were part of the process of making Man like his Father. The fall and the subsequent state of existence with pain and suffering are a part of the process till we attain the full stature of Jesus.



Artemis of Ephesus

Twin sister to Apollo, she was goddess of chastity, virginity, the hunt, the moon, and the natural environment. She was chief hunter to the gods and goddess of hunting and of wild animals, especially bears. She is the daughter of Zeus and Leto. Even though she is a virgin goddess, she also presides over childbirth. Sacred to her are the laurel, fir tree, fish, stag, boar, bear, dog, goat, bee and other animals. Although traditionally the friend and protector of youth, especially young women, Artemis prevented the Greeks from sailing to Troy during the Trojan war until they sacrificed a maiden to her. According to some accounts, just before the sacrifice, she rescued the victim, Iphigenia.



And there is no doubt that the temple was indeed magnificent. "I have seen the walls and Hanging Gardens of ancient Babylon," wrote Philon of Byzantium, "the statue of Olympian Zeus, the Colossus of Rhodes, the mighty work of the high Pyramids and the tomb of Mausolus. But when I saw the temple at Ephesus rising to the clouds, all these other wonders were put in the shade."

So what happened to this great temple? And what happened to the city that hosted it? What turned Ephesus from a busy port of trade to a few shacks in a swamp?

The first shrine to the Goddess Artemis was probably built around 800 B.C. on a marshy strip near the river at Ephesus.

The Ephesus Goddess Artemis, sometimes called Diana, is not the same figure as the Artemis worshiped in Greece.

The Greek Artemis is the goddess of the hunt.

The Ephesus Artemis was a goddess of fertility and was often pictured as draped with eggs, or multiple breasts, symbols of fertility, from her waist to her shoulders.

That earliest temple contained a sacred stone, probably a meteorite, that had "fallen from Jupiter." The shrine was destroyed and rebuilt several times over the next few hundred years. By 600 B.C., the city of Ephesus had become a major port of trade and an architect named Chersiphron was engaged to build a new large temple. He designed it with high stone columns. Concerned that carts carrying the columns might get mired in the swampy ground around the site, Chersiphron laid the columns on their sides and had them rolled to where they would be erected.

This temple didn't last long. In 550 B.C. King Croesus of Lydia conquered Ephesus and the other Greek cities of Asia Minor. During the fighting, the temple was destroyed. Croesus proved himself a gracious winner, though, by contributing generously to the building of a new temple.

This was next to the last of the great temples to Artemis in Ephesus and it dwarfed those that had come before. The architect is thought to be a man named Theodorus. Theodorus's temple was 300 feet in length and 150 feet wide with an area four times the size of the temple before it. More than one hundred stone columns supported a massive roof.

The new temple was the pride of Ephesus until 356 B.C. when a tragedy, by name of Herostratus, struck. Herostratus was a young Ephesian who would stop at no cost to have his name go down in history. He managed this by burning the temple to the ground. The citizens of Ephesus were so appalled at this act they issued a decree that anyone who spoke of Herostratus would be put to death.

Shortly after this horrible deed, a new temple was commissioned. The architect was Scopas of Paros, one of the most famous sculptors of his day. Ephesus was one of the greatest cities in Asia Minor at this point and no expense was spared in the construction. According to Pliny the Elder, a Roman historian, the temple was a "wonderful monument of Grecian magnificence, and one that merits our genuine admiration."

The temple was built in the same marshy place as before. To prepare the ground, Pliny recorded that "layers of trodden charcoal were placed beneath, with fleeces covered with wool upon the top of them."

The building is thought to be the first completely constructed with marble and one of its most unusual features were 36 columns whose lower portions were carved with figures in high-relief (*left*). The temple also housed many works of art including four bronze statues of Amazon women.

Pliny recorded the length of this new temple at 425 feet and the width at 225 feet. Some 127 columns, 60 feet in height, supported the roof. In comparison the Parthenon, the remains of which stand on the acropolis in Athens today, was only 230 feet long, 100 feet wide and had 58 columns.

According to Pliny, construction took 120 years, though some experts suspect it may have only taken half that time. We do know that when Alexander the Great came to Ephesus in 333 B.C., the temple was still under construction. He offered to finance the completion of the temple if the city would credit him as the builder. The city fathers didn't want Alexander's name carved on the temple, but didn't want to tell him that. They finally gave the tactful response: "It is not fitting that one god should build a temple for another god" and Alexander didn't press the matter.

Pliny reported that earthen ramps were employed to get the heavy stone beams perched on top of the columns. This method seemed to work well until one of the largest beams was put into position above the door. It went down crookedly and the architect could find no way to get it to lie flat. He was beside himself with worry about this until he had a dream one night in which the Goddess herself appeared to him saying that he should not be concerned. She herself had moved the stone in the proper position. The next morning the architect found that the dream was true. During the night the beam had settled into its proper place.

The city continued to prosper over the next few hundred years and was the destination for many pilgrims coming to view the temple. A souvenir business in miniature Artemis idols, perhaps similar to a statue of her in the temple, grew up around the shrine. It was one of these business proprietors, a man named Demetrius, that gave St. Paul a difficult time when he visited the city in 57 A.D.

St. Paul came to the city to win converts to the then new religion of Christianity. He was so successful that Demetrius feared the people would turn away from Artemis and he would lose his livelihood. He called others of his trade together with him and gave a rousing speech ending with "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" They then seized two of Paul's companions and a near riot followed. Eventually the city was quieted, the men released, and Paul left for Macedonia.

It was Paul's Christianity that won out in the end, though. By the time the great Temple of Artemis was destroyed during a raid by the Goths in 262 A.D., both the city and the religion of Artemis were in decline. When the Roman Emperor Constantine rebuilt much of Ephesus a century later, he declined to restore the temple. He had become a Christian and had little interest in pagan temples.

Despite Constantine's efforts, Ephesus declined in its importance as a crossroads of trade. The bay where ships docked disappeared as silt from the river filled it. In the end what was left of the city was miles from the sea, and many of the inhabitants left swampy lowland to live in the surrounding hills. Those that remained used the ruins of the temple as a source of building materials. Many of the fine sculptures were pounded into powder to make lime for wall plaster.

In 1863 the British Museum sent John Turtle Wood, an architect, to search for the temple. Wood met with many obstacles. The region was infested with bandits. Workers were hard to find. His budget was too small. Perhaps the biggest difficulty was that he had no idea where the temple was located. He searched for the temple for six years. Each year the British Museum threatened to cut off his funding unless he found something significant, and each year he convinced them to fund him for just one more season.

Wood kept returning to the site each year many despite hardships. During his first season he was thrown from a horse, breaking his collar bone. Two years later he was stabbed within an inch of his heart during an assassination attempt upon the British Consul in Smyrna.

Finally in 1869, at the bottom of a muddy twenty-foot deep test pit, his crew struck the base of the great temple. Wood then excavated the whole foundation removing 132,000 cubic yards of the swamp to leave a hole some 300 feet wide and 500 feet long. The remains of some of the sculptured portions were found and shipped to the British Museum where they can be viewed even today.

In 1904 another British Museum expedition under the leadership of D.G. Hograth continued the excavation. Hograth found evidence of five temples on the site, each constructed on top of the other.

Today the site of the temple is a marshy field. A single column is erect to remind visitors of a temple that was.

Chapter Four

SMYRNA

Rev. 2:8-11

Rev 2:8 And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things saith the first and the last, who was dead, and lived *again*:

Rev 2:9 I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they art not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Rev 2:10 Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.

Rev 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Smyrna, a large ancient city on the western coast of Asia Minor, at the head of a gulf which reaches 30 miles inland, was originally peopled by the Asiatics known as the Lelages.

The city seems to have been taken from the Lelages by the Aeolian Greeks about 1100 BC; there still remain traces of the cyclopean masonry of that early time.

In 688 BC it passed into the possession of the Ionian Greeks and was made one of the cities of the Ionian confederacy, but in 627 BC it was taken by the Lydians.

During the years 301 to 281 BC, Lysimachus entirely rebuilt it on a new site and surrounded it by a wall.

It was celebrated for its schools of science and medicine, and for its handsome buildings

Among them was the Homerium, for Smyrna was one of several places which claimed to be the birthplace of the poet Homer.

On the slope of Mt. Pagus was a theater which seated 20,000 spectators.

In the 23 AD year a temple was built in honor of Tiberius and his mother Julia, and the Golden Street, connecting the temples of Zeus and Cybele, is said to have been the best in any ancient city.

Like many other cities of Asia Minor, Smyrna suffered frequently, especially during the years 178-80 AD, from earthquakes, but it always escaped entire destruction.

During the Middle Ages the city was the scene of many struggles, the most fierce of which was directed by Timur against the Christians. Tradition relates that there he built a tower, using the heads of a thousand captives which he put to death.

Smyrna was the last of the Christian cities to hold out against the Mohammedans.

In 1424 it fell into the hands of the Turks.

It was the discovery of America and the resulting discovery of a sea route to India which ruined the Smyrna trade.

Modern Smyrna is still the largest city in Asia Minor, with a population of about 250,000, of whom half are Greek and less than one-fourth are Mohammedans.

Its modern name, Ismir, is but a Turkish corruption of the ancient name. It is the capital of the Aidin vilayet, and therefore the home of a governor.

Several railroads follow the courses of the ancient routes into the distant interior. In its harbor ships from all parts of the world may be seen.

The ancient harbor of Paul's time has been filled in, and there the modern bazaars stand.

The old stadium has been destroyed to make room for modern buildings, and a large part of the ancient city lies buried beneath the modern houses and the 40 mosques of which the city boasts.

Traces of the ancient walls are still to be found. West of Mt. Pagus is the Ephesian gate, and the Black-gate, as the Turks call it, is near the railroad station.

The castle upon Mt. Pagus, 460 ft. above the sea, dates from Byzantine times.

The prosperity of Smyrna is due, not only to the harbor and the port of entry to the interior, but partly to the perfect climate of spring and autumn—the winters are cold and the summers are hot; and also to the fertility of the surrounding country.

Figs, grapes, valonia, opium, sponges, cotton and liquorice root are among the chief articles of trade.

Polycarp

Some think the present angel or pastor of this church, was Polycarp, the disciple of John. Irenaeus, who knew him, says he was appointed bishop of Smyrna by the apostles.

Here he suffered martyrdom, and was buried: the large amphitheatre, in which he was put to death, is still to be seen, and his sepulcher is yet preserved in this place.

Eusebius talks about an epistle, sent by this church at Smyrna to the church at Pontus, giving an account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, According to the Apostolical Constitutions, the first bishops of Smyrna were Aristo Strataeas and Aristo the second, and Apelles, of whom mention is made in Rom 16:10; and who is reckoned among the seventy disciples. Then in succession was Polycarp.

Rom 16:10 Salute⁷⁸² Apelles⁵⁵⁹ approved¹³⁸⁴ in¹⁷²² Christ¹⁵⁴⁷. Salute⁷⁸² them³⁵⁸⁸ which are of¹⁵³⁷ Aristobulus⁷¹¹' household . household: or, friends

There Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, was martyred, though without the sanction of the Roman government. It seems that the Jews of Smyrna were more antagonistic than were the Romans to the spread of Christianity, for it is said that even on Saturday, their sacred day, they brought wood for the fire in which Polycarp was burned. His grave is still shown in a cemetery there.



POLYCARP, martyred in A.D. 168, eighty-six years after his conversion, was bishop, and probably "the angel of the Church in Smyrna" meant here. The allusions to persecutions and faithfulness unto death accord with this view.

IGNATIUS [The Martyrdom of Ignatius 3], on his way to martyrdom in Rome, wrote to POLYCARP, then (A.D. 108) bishop of Smyrna; if his bishopric commenced ten or twelve years earlier, the dates will harmonize.

TERTULLIAN [The Prescription against Heretics, 32], and IRENÆUS, who had talked with POLYCARP in youth, tell us POLYCARP was consecrated bishop of Smyrna by St. John.

Polycarp, the venerable bishop of Smyrna, hearing that persons were seeking for him, escaped, but was discovered by a child. After feasting the guards who apprehended him, he desired an hour in prayer, which being allowed, he prayed with such fervency, that his guards repented that they had been instrumental in taking him. He was, however, carried before the proconsul, condemned, and burnt in the market place.

The proconsul then urged him, saying, "Swear, and I will release thee;--reproach Christ."

Polycarp answered, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, Who hath

saved me?" At the stake to which he was only tied, but not nailed as usual, as he assured them he should stand immovable, the flames, on their kindling the fagots, encircled his body, like an arch, without touching him; and the executioner, on seeing this, was ordered to pierce him with a sword, when so great a quantity of blood flowed out as extinguished the fire. But his body, at the instigation of the enemies of the Gospel, especially Jews, was ordered to be consumed in the pile, and the request of his friends, who wished to give it Christian burial, rejected. They nevertheless collected his bones and as much of his remains as possible, and caused them to be decently interred.

THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA THROUGH CENTUARIES

A bishop from Smyrna attended the council at Nicea.

In the 5c. Bishop Protherius, was present in the synod at Chalcedon.

Bishop Aethericus, assisted at three synods in this century, at Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon.

In the 6c there was a bishop of Smyrna in the fifth synod held at Rome and Constantinople: and even in the "eighth" century, one Antony, a monk, supplied the place of the bishop of Smyrna in the Nicene synod.

The Turks have in this place now thirteen mosques, the Jews two synagogues, and of the Christians there are two churches belonging to the Greeks, and one to the Armenians .

A Persecuted Church

This church, and its pastor, represent the state of the church under the persecutions of the Roman emperors.

myrrh

Smyrna signifies "myrrh", which being bitter of taste, is expressive of the bitter afflictions, and persecutions, and deaths, the people of God in this interval endured; and yet, as myrrh is of a sweet smell, so were those saints, in their sufferings for Christ, exceeding grateful and well pleasing to him.

Myrrh

Myrrh is a resinous substance that comes from the broken branches of a low shrub-like tree to be found in desert areas in the Middle East. The sap forms a hard ocher-colored resin that was gathered and used in a number of products. The oil used for anointing the ark and the tabernacle when they were consecrated (Exod. 30.23-33) contained myrrh. it was used in the purification rites for women and, because of its fragrant pleasing odor, as a base in cosmetic oils and perfumes. The magi included myrrh among their gifts to Jesus.

Myrrh has a powerful narcotic effect and was combined with wine as a painkiller and soporific. At his crucifixion, Jesus refused a mixture of wine and myrrh. Later he drank vinegar, or a fermented acidic drink commonly used by laborers and soldiers to quench their thirst. Myrrh was also used to anoint corpses. The powerful aroma counteracted the stench of decomposition. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea used a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes when they wrapped the body of Jesus in a linen shroud (John 19.38-39). The women who went to the tomb probably included myrrh among the spices they brought as an expression of their love for Jesus.

Nothing is said by way of complaint to this church; not that she was without fault, but it was proper to use her tenderly in her afflicted state.

Myrrh was used in the embalming of dead bodies, it may point to the many deaths and martyrdoms of the saints in this period, whereby their names and memories are perpetuated and eternized.

These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.

Of these characters of Christ, give encouragement to the persecuted the saints.

Though you are called to undergo the bitterest deaths for his sake, be of good cheer, you will be raised again as he was, and live with him for ever.

And I know the blasphemy. Reviling of the Jews against the Lord.

Say they are Jews. Those who say that they are Jews were of the Jewish race, but were not of the true Israel. "He is not a (true) Jew who is one outwardly," etc. (Rom 2:28). John denies the right of these Jewish opposers to use the term "Jews" in the sense of God's chosen people. Their synagogue was the synagogue of Satan. Such strong language implies a complete separation of the church and synagogue, an event that occurred at the period of the destruction of Jerusalem. See Act 21:20-26.

Fear none, etc. The church shall suffer, but it need not fear for the reasons about to be given.
The devil shall cast. He may use the Jews as instruments but he is the real agent.

Shall have tribulation ten days.

Short time Whether the "ten days" of persecution means a short time, or a definite period symbolized by "ten days" is uncertain.

Day= year

A day is often a symbol of a year.

Ten persecutions are named by church historians and two persecutions of ten years each. It might refer to one of the latter which should bear very heavily on that church. The Diocletian persecution continued ten years and three months.

The period described here fits the period of martyrs of the persecution Period from AD 100 to AD 325. The ten days probably refers to the ten Imperial Persecutions. Christians suffered financially and lived in poverty to begging. They suffered slander being accused of Cannibalism (eating the flesh of Christ and in communion drinking blood) But they were full overcomers, being faithful unto death. There is a beautiful story of Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna handed down to us in history. Read it in Fox's book of Martyrs..

The Ten Primitive Persecutions

1. **Nero** (Roman emperor AD 54–68), persecution stirred up in AD 64. In this persecution the apostle Paul was killed and the apostle Peter crucified in Rome. This first persecution ceased under Vespasian (AD 69–79).
2. **Domitian** (Roman emperor AD 81–96). John, the apostle and evangelist was exiled to Patmos . After the death of Domitian, John was released and came to Ephesus in AD 97, where he wrote his Gospel and where he lived until the time of Trajan.
3. **Trajan** (Roman emperor AD 98–117). Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch suffered in this persecution.
4. **Marcus Aurelius**, his other name being **Antoninus Verus** (Roman emperor AD 161–180). Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, and the Christian martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, two cities in France, were martyred in this persecution.
5. **Septimius Severus** (Roman emperor AD 193–211). This persecution extended to northern Africa, which was a Roman province.
6. **Maximinus, Gaius Julius Verus** (Roman emperor AD 235–238).
7. **Decius** (Roman emperor AD 249–251). Fabian martyred; Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, forced into exile; and Origen was imprisoned and tortured.
8. **Valerian** (Roman emperor AD 253–260).
9. **Aurelian** (Roman emperor AD 270–275).
10. **Diocletian** (Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus, reigned AD 284–305) and **Maximian** (reigned AD 285–305) governed as emperors together. Diocletian began his furious persecution against the Christians in 303. The emperor ordered the doors of the Christian church at Nicomedia, the capital, to be barred, and then burnt the edifice with 600 Christians within. Many edicts were issued by him against Christians. Churches were demolished, Christian books were seized and burnt, Christians were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and killed. The persecution brought a considerable number of martyrs, and it continued until 313, when Emperor Constantine set Christians free and proclaimed religious freedom.

Church History of Eusebius of Caesarea. (AD 260–340)

The crown of life.

Not a royal crown but the garland crown of victory over death. See 2Ti 4:8.

Jam 1:12 Blessed³¹⁰⁷ is the man⁴³⁵ that³⁷³⁹ endureth⁵²⁷⁸ temptation³⁹⁸⁶: for³⁷⁵⁴ when he is tried^{1384, 1096}, he shall receive²⁹⁸³ the crown⁴⁷³⁵ of life²²²², which³⁷³⁹ the Lord²⁹⁶² hath promised¹⁸⁶¹ to them that love²⁵ him⁸⁴⁶.

The same phrase occurs in Rev 2:10. It is the genitive of apposition, life itself being the crown as in 1Pe 5:4. This crown is "an honorable ornament" (Ropes), with possibly no reference to the victor's crown (garland of leaves) as with Paul in 1Co 9:25; 2Ti 4:8,

It probably signifies fulfilled abundant life – life as it should be – glory to glory life not dying

Shall not be hurt of the second death. Those who win the victory shall live forever. To die the second death is to be sent from the judgment throne into hell. See Rev 20:14.

Chapter Five

PERGAMOS

Rev. 2:12-17

Rev 2:12 and to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword:
Rev 2:13 I know where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's throne is; and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth.
Rev 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.
Rev 2:15 So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner.
Rev 2:16 Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.
Rev 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.

Our Lord identifies himself to it as the one having "the sharp, doubled-edged sword." The Word of God coming from his lips is double-edged; it cuts two ways. It cuts down the enemies and it cuts the evil within the church. God is no respecter of persons. He cuts down evil and sin wherever it is seen. Both ways - within and without. This Church had enemies outside in the world and within the church was heresy and evil practices.

Now we take a ride 60 miles north to the interior of Asia Minor to the place called Pergamum or Pergamos. This was once the capital of Asia before it was shifted to Ephesus. Pergamos was an ancient Greek city (an Arcadian colony) built around a hill north of river Kaikos, four kilometers away from the sea. Pergamos experienced high growth during the successors of Alexander the Great. King Lysimachos deposited his treasures there and assigned Fileretos to be their guardian. After the death of Lysimachos (283 BC), Fileretos became the autonomous ruler of the city. His brother Attalos founded the Kingdom of Pergamos. The Attalian Dynasty ruled the Kingdom for approximately 150 years and, during this era, Pergamos grew into a glorious and important city, alongside the then flourishing cities of Alexandria and Antiochia. It was an important trade, industrial, scientific and art center. Pergamos fell into the Roman hands in 133 BC. The Arabs conquered and looted the city in AD 716 and Tamerlane looted it in 1401. The city lost its splendor and fell into ruins. In 1675 there were no more than 20 Christian families. During the 1821 Hellenic Revolution in which this city took part devastated the city further.

Jesus says that this is the location of the "throne of Satan." And it was. It was the capital of the Roman province of Asia, and was famed for its site on a 1000 foot hill which held its acropolis, dedicated to Zeus, Athena, Dionysus and Asclepius (around which centered a cult dedicated to medicine), and it also was the center of the Imperial cult, the worship of Augustus Caesar.

This was an intellectual city with a city library holding over 20,000 volumes, second only to the ancient library of Alexandria at that time. The word 'parchment' actually comes from the city's name Pergamos. Pliny says that it was invented in the second century BC in Pergamum; hence the term 'parchment' from the Latin *pergamena* - 'of Pergamum'. Skin had been used as a writing material before in several other countries. But the refined methods of cleaning and stretching so that the parchment can be scribed on both sides of a leaf, leading eventually to the making of the manuscript rolls by the binding the leaves to form a book was new. Vellum is a parchment made from the delicate skins of young animals and the superior quality ones were made specially from unborn or still born baby animals.

Not far from the City was the center of worship of Zeus - the temple at Olympia in the state of Elis in Peloponnesus. In the center of the worship of the Acropolis in the city stood the Temple of Athena and on top of the mountain 800 feet above the plain led by a long flight of steps stood the imposing altar of Zeus over a 100 feet square land. It was another of world's Seven Wonders of the ancient world.. It was here that the Olympic games started. The temple of Zeus housed a colossal gold and ivory statue of Zeus, made by Pheidias of Athens in the fifth century BC. The statue was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Antiochus IV made a temple for Apollo at Daphne, near Antioch using the same pattern and dimensions. Pausanius provides a description of the statue of Zeus and the temple area at Olympia. Pausanius says a woollen curtain, of eastern design, "adorned with Assyrian weaving and Phoenician purple", was dedicated to Zeus at Olympia by Antiochus IV. Some scholars believe that the curtain was taken from the temple in Jerusalem, when Antiochus plundered its treasures in BC 530. The columns were made of Pentelic marble, in the Corinthian style. This enormous structure, the largest temple in Greece, was finally completed by the Emperor Hadrian three centuries later, in the 2nd century AD. Its ruins can be still seen.

Pergamum was also the center for the worship of Serpent god Aesculapius - the god of medicine. Pergamum had the greatest physicians of that time. We still have the intertwined serpent symbol for medicine - though it is now being gradually replaced by the red cross symbol. Until a few decade ago the medical symbol was the intertwined serpent called Aschelpion.



Caduce and the Cross as symbol of Medicine

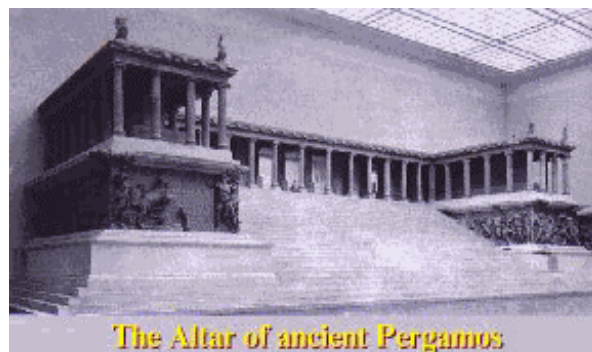


Worship of the Aeshelpion
(Pergamum Coin)

The Seven Wonders of the World

The usual list consists of (1) the Pyramids; (2) the Hanging Gardens of Babylon; (3) the Statue of Zeus at Olympia; (4) the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus (5) the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus; (6) the Colossus of Rhodes; and (7) the Lighthouse at Alexandria. The Greek/Hellenistic ones (all but 1 & 2) date from the late 5th century BC through to the late 3rd BC, and three of these (4, 5, 6) are near to the coast of southern Turkey. Crudely, we might say that all these monuments are in the list because of their great size and enormous cost. Difficulty overcome is an additional criterion in the case of the Temple of Artemis (the swampy site) and the Colossus of Rhodes (its height), whilst artistic value singles out the Statue of Zeus at Olympia and the Mausoleum.

Made with black marble house the Altar of the Serpent which is referred to in the letter as the Throne of Satan. On a coin of Septimus Severus, the altar at Pergamum is depicted, covered by a baldachin, or canopy, supported by four columns.



The Altar of ancient Pergamos
Ruins of the Zeus temple in Athens built by Antiochus IV

Evidently, Pergamos was the center of a satanic cult of the ancient world. Many scholars think that the "Seat of Satan" refers to the great altar of Zeus which was on the hillside overlooking the city. The seat itself was a great chair, or throne, forty feet high kept high up at the center of the structure to be seen by any one. A famous tourist book by Bedecker mentions, in a section dedicated to Berlin, that since 1944, the Altar of

Pergamos was placed in one of Berlin's museums after it was excavated by German archeologists. For 100 years Satan's throne has been in East Berlin. If that has any connection with the rise of Hitler and the Nazis I leave to you to judge. But East Berlin is also where Hitler's headquarters were located. The Swedish paper "Svenska Dagbladet" reported on January 27, 1948 that after capturing Berlin, the Soviet Army removed the original Satanic altar to Moscow. However the altar did not appear in the museum for a long time. When the Architect Schusev, built Lenin's tomb, he took the Pergamos altar as the prototype for his structure. The archeologist Federicc Paulson assisted him with details. This was in 1924.

"Thou holdest fast my name", is another version which some people consider is given more in a tone of reproach than commendation. The word Pergamos means "much married". From the same root we get the words monogamy and bigamy, polygamy etc.. Just as an unfaithful wife continues to hold her husband's name, the churches were flirting with the world and other religions while professing to be Christians. However the interpretation seems to me as far fetched. Jesus is commending the great strength of faith at least some of the Christians showed in the midst of such Satanic cults.

The church here had a tough time. We do not know much about Antipas except by orthodox tradition. According to this tradition this saint lived during the reign of emperor Dometian in 83 AD He was contemporary with the Apostles. Antipas was consecrated bishop of Pergamos by the Apostle John. When he was old, he was caught by the idolaters of Pergamos. The demons, whom they worshipped, appeared to them and told them that they could neither live in that place nor accept their sacrifices because Antipas was forcing them out. So, Antipas was brought to the governor, who tried to convince him that older things are much more honorable. Thus, the governor concluded that the religion of the Greeks was more honorable since it was older and grew with the passing of time. Antipas countered the argument using Cain's story as proof. Even though Cain was older in age than Abel, Abel was accepted by God and not Cain. When the governor and the Greeks heard this answer they burnt with anger and put the old Antipas in a red-hot brazen bull and roasted him alive. On April 11 the memory of holy hero martyr Antipas, Bishop of Pergamos is still celebrated by the Orthodox Churches around the world. Antipas means "against all" and he stood against all odds for the faith that was once and for all handed down to him by the Apostles.

But the church in Pergamos was besetted by two problems:

1. The teaching of Baalam
2. Nicolaitanism.

The Teaching of Balaam

The Story of Balaam is explained in Numbers 22 to 25, but the doctrine of Balaam is clarified in Num. 31:15-16. Numbers 22-24 enumerates how Balak the King of Moab wanted Balaam, the Prophet to curse Israel. So he offered Balaam an extravagant reward. But the prophet even though tempted to his core remained true to his God Yahweh. He could not curse Israel. So he counseled the King Balak to make peace with Israel and invite them to join in their feasts and intermarry. This is indicated in Num 31:15-16 where God's anger was kindled when contrary to the divine instructions Israel left all the women alive after the conquest of Moab - the very thing God wanted destroyed. These women were asked to seduce the men of Israel by King Balaam with the strategy suggested by Balaam.

Num 24:25 Then Balaam got up and returned home and Balak went his own way.

Num 25:1 While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, Num 25:2 who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. Num 25:3 So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. And the Lord's anger burned against them.

Num 31:14 Moses was angry with the officers of the army--the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds--who returned from the battle. Num 31:15 "Have you allowed all the women to live?" he asked them. Num 31:16 "They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the LORD in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the Lord's people. Num 31:17 Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, Num 31:18 but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man.

Yoke along with Baal was the doctrine of Balaam. It consists of:

*eating the things sacrificed to the idols

** to commit fornication.

Concerning the food offered to idols we have Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 8:1-9. The point here is when it becomes a compromise it becomes deadly. Getting involved into the feasts of the temple drags you away into the things of the evil. Not only that, you may become a dead witness, it may even become a trap.

Ritual fornication was a part of most pagan cults. So was it among the Cananites and the Moabites. It was also part of the worship of the Greek and Roman cults. Today it is the center of Satan Worship and is practiced widely among the business community for furthering good will among business magnets. For those gentiles who came from such background, these two became a great temptation among the Christian brotherhood of the period. This is why the verdict of the Synod of Jerusalem put down the following conditions. The counterpart we face in our day is the practice of pornography and fornication among Christians and the acceptance of living together without marriage, that is often widespread in the churches today. That is the error of Balaam.

= Abstain from pollution of idols
from fornication
from what is strangled
and from blood.

James spoke up:

Acts 15:20 Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.

Fornication is the sex involvement of two persons in which at least one is married to a different partner. It is the symbol of unfaithfulness to life partners and is therefore the symbol of man's unfaithfulness to God. Thus fornication is a visible form of idol worship and has always been associated with it. The punishment for this social sin in the Old Testament was death by stoning. The punishment of body fornication is the realization of the existing separation of the life partner to eternal separation by killing the fornicator. In the same way the punishment for spiritual fornication is the realization of the separation to be eternal i.e. eternal separation from Christ.

In today's social context, living among an unchristian if not anti-christian surroundings we live in the same condition as that of the Pergamos. Are we going along with the rest of the community tolerating what is evil and immoral?

Nicolaitans

Mystery shrouds the cult of Nicolaitans. Three possible explanations can be found.

1. These may be the followers of Nicolaus of Antioch who is said to have apostatized due to his false doctrine of Gnosticism and Antinomianism; or
2. These were a group who followed Balaam in teaching that it was permissible for God's people to engage in idolatry and immorality; or
3. It is a direct reference to the of the clerical system, or the developement of a class of Priests within the church.

1. Nicolaus of Antioch.

Nicolaus of Antioch was one of the seven original deacons, appointed by the Apostles to serve at the tables. He was a Jewish proselyte (Acts 6:5). This Nicolas deviated from the doctrine mixing Gnosticism and Antinomianism with the Historic Christian doctrines. This story is told by Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Dorotheus of Tyre, Jerome, Augustine and Eusebius. They all say this was a sect of licentious antinomian Gnostics who lapsed into their antinomian license because of an over-strained asceticism. Hippolytus adds that Nicolaus was the forerunner of Hymenaeus and Philetus who was condemned in 2 Timothy 2:17. Eusebius adds that after the group was censured by John in the Apocalypse, the sect disappeared in a very short time.

What is Gnosticism? The Gnostics claims to have special direct revelation superior to the Apostles themselves. Secret teachings are given to them by God directly. Some of the Gnostics denied the true humanity of Christ. They taught that the title of Christ was simply a divine anointing that came out from God and rested upon the man, Jesus, at His baptism. As long as this Spirit was on this man Jesus, he was Christ. The anointing left Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, just before His crucifixion. Jesus was man, but Christ was God. There are various shades of Gnostics that we cannot really define the cult in one shade of color.

Certain branches of Gnosticism teach that between God and creatures there are various grades of beings, some spiritual and others material. Since God being good cannot be the creator of evil, these secondary beings were the cause of the evil. So they postulated a series of emanations, aeons, spirits, angels etc. that came in between God and matter. Each generation is removed from central godhead by a distance and hence in its moral perfection. The furthest among them is the embodied beings. The body is inherently sinful, and hence the Gnostics practiced asceticism, self-torture and self-denial, in an effort to attain a higher spiritual state.

Another growth of this movement was Antinomianism. Antinomianism is the teaching that a person who is saved by grace and is under grace needs not practice self-control. The sons are free. The sons can do whatever they want because there is total freedom in Christ. A Christian may give full satisfaction to his bodily desires and appetites and passions without incurring any condemnation. It is these problems that were addressed by Paul in the Church of Collosia (col. 1:1-14). All the errors which existed in the Apostolic Age are still with us today. Gnosticism has reappeared in Christian Science, Jehovah's witnesses and in the Unitarian church. Antinomianism is characteristic of all who say that because we are under grace, we can live as we please.

2. Nicolaitans were a sect who encouraged Christians to engage in idolatry and immorality

It must have been a direct consequence of the loving caring church as a unity. So Nicolaitans introduced sex orgies as an expression of Christian love in their love feasts. Sex is hallowed by God as an expression of faithfulness and love and as an experience of Heaven and its joy as a result of intense personal unity. This is based on total commitment between a couple. Polyandry (One man- several wives) was allowed by God in the Old Testament period, 'because of their hard heartedness'. Polygamy (One woman - several husbands) fared better in other cultures. However they were far from ideal. Even in the ideal Hindu Tantric cult of sex as a realization of Godhead, total commitment to one partner is required. Later cults degenerated it to promiscuity as we have seen in Rajneesh and other cults. Nicolaitanism was the Rajneesh cult of Christianity and was a corruption of Truth. Corruption was always the trump card of Satan. The cult of the Children of God (They have been changing their names as a camouflague. What is their current name?) is the modern day version of Nicolaitanism. In every closely-knit Christian fellowship, this danger still lurks. Many a mighty preachers have fallen under this temptation.

3. Nicolaitanism is the teaching of the Clerical Supremacy.

The Greek word nikos means victory or conqueror and laos means . people or laity. So we get the meaning "conqueror of the people." This is similar to the meaning of the Hebrew word "Balaam" which means "swallow of the people." The mystical interpretation of "the teaching of Balaam" in 2:14 is said to point to the "teaching of the Nicolaitans" in 2:15, providing support for this identification. John often uses Hebrew and Greek words to name the same object as in (Apollyon and Abaddon) Revelation 9:11. Hence this is a very plausible interpretation. Like fornication, priest craft is also a corruption of a church arrangement. Bishops, elders and deacons were ordained in the early church to serve the people at the tables (because in the early church meals were served as a routine - every day) and to take care of the administrations. They were not considered spiritual authorities over people. In a sense teachers and evangelists, even though not ordained were the actual spiritual authorities. They were not ordained, but charismatic. The priesthood is a carryover from the Jewish temple cult. With the universal priesthood concept of the Christianity the separate human intermediary between man and God was for a time abandoned. However Apostles discovered that the running of an institution required institutional authorities - who were to overlook the matters regarding administration and distribution. Hence the ordaining of Deacons as in Acts

Acts 6:2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Acts 6:3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them Acts 6:4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

In all early churches, trustees from the laity handled the administrative matters even when there was an ordained priest for liturgical and spiritual purposes. However the Priests who formed a new class separated themselves from the laity and took authority over the laity (Nico- laity) The separation took in two steps.

1. In creating a separate Priestly Class. Among an unholy people priests were to be holy unto the Lord. This is why Israel had a tribe so separated. But this is no truer for Christians. See Peter 2:1-10 and Heb. 10:19-25. As Christianity entered to Greek and Roman culture, the Christian priests adopted the dress of the Jewish Priests. In so doing the laity got out of touch with the word of God and relegated everything from the study of the word, preaching, witnessing, and even praying to the Priest who were paid for that purpose.

2. In converting the worship into a ritual mystery over which laity had no control left out the laity in the assembly hall as passive participants which simple responses. It was to the advantage of the Priests to introduce as much rituals and mystery and unintelligibility to the worship as possible. This introduced the mystic and Gnostic elements into the church. As a result ordinary men and women in the church became ignorant and considered the teachings of Christians as a mystery and beyond his understanding. Again Gnostic tendencies have crept in here.

It is probably to this move that Jesus is referring to. As history has shown, this development eventually led the church into a dark period. Only the word of God could revive the church through reformation in the 18th century. We could still see the two forces within the churches. This is more true within the Catholic church and the Pentecostal Churches. Lay movements and Charismatic movements are looked upon with suspicion. Even in the independent churches, personality cults create the same problem. Counterfeit revivals of today are an example of this. Though they do not wear separate dresses and calls themselves Brothers, the cult grows around their authority and revelation peculiar to them and not on the basis of the word of God. Strangely enough these personal revelations - which are often contrary to the word of God- are given a status equal to the scriptures.

The rewards promised in verse 17 follows the concept of fidelity to Jesus as husband.

I will give you the hidden manna. Manna was the food that sustained Israel through their wilderness travel. Jesus promises enough strength to stand against the foes of the Satanic City.

I will give you a white stone with a personal name. As the husband and wife have their own secret personal names for each other, Jesus promises a close relation with those who overcome.

White stones were used in those days

1. As a token of acquittal from the court. There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
2. As a token for ration which provides food and provision for families.
3. As a lucky charm to keep them from the evil ones.

Dispensationally this refers to a period known as the
State Church Period
(AD 325 to 590)

When Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity as the official religion of the Sate. The reasons for such a move was both political and religious. By the time of the ascension of Constantine, the Christians had conquered the palace and the royal family working underground. His predecessor Emperor Diocletian ordered severe purge of the entire civil service, and the palace service only to discover that his own wife and children were Christians. In order to maintain the unity of the Empire according to the then existing ideas of "one nation - one religion - one god", the official religion was changed to Christianity. In order to become a religion of the state, Christianity itself had to undergo drastic dressing up by absorbing Roman techniques, symbols, ceremonies and practices. Priest craft, mystery symbols, ceremonies associated with worship and separation common people and clergy, daily sacrifices, penance, hierarchy of gods and saints and even idol worship has to come into it so that every one could accept it. A socially acceptable religion for every one was so generated. We could see the same trend in modern New Age movements. We could see the same trend in christian churches today. Are we willing to forgo the basic tenents of Christianity and the centrality of Jesus because it may not be acceptable to the other religions. These are actually the continuation of the Gnostic traditions on which Jesus pronounces his intolerance. Jesus described this in his Kingdom Parables of Mathew 13 in the parable of the Mustard Tree. Mustard is an herb and can never become a tree, but it did. It grew so big and brought forth branches and "the birds of the air" found shelter in it. We have here the magnificent State Church of the early period.

But forget the tree and the birds and the paraphernalia. Jesus calls you to be his special bride. He promises a relationship

Chapter Six

THYATIRA

Rev. 2:18-29

Rev 2:18 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished brass:

Rev 2:19 I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first.

Rev 2:20 But I have *this* against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.

Rev 2:21 And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to repent of her fornication.

Rev 2:22 Behold, I cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works.

Rev 2:23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works.

Rev 2:24 But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who know not the deep things of Satan, as they are wont to say; I cast upon you none other burden.

Rev 2:25 Nevertheless that which ye have, hold fast till I come.

Rev 2:26 And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations:

Rev 2:27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father:

Rev 2:28 and I will give him the morning star.

Rev 2:29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.



Thyatira Bronze-smith

The ancient city of Thyatira is located approximately 80 Kms to the north-east of Smyrna (Izmir) and is known today as Akhisar. Of the ancient city only the temple of Apollo, an ancient church and a colonnaded road remain. The city was founded by Lydians when it was called Pelopio. Years later Selucus Nicator, one of the generals of Alexander the Great, conquered the city during the 3rd century BC. It was Selucus who changed the name to Thyatira. By 100 BC the city came under the influence of the Romans and majority of the people were Jewish settlers. It was situated at the junction of two valleys and therefore was an important traffic controlling station. There was a Roman garrison stationed there for this purpose. A market developed around this and became famous for purple cloth and pottery. As an important and strategically placed trade route junction, the two trades - the purple cloth and pottery - flourished there. The Thyatiraian purple cloth was known all over the world and was used by Emperors, Kings and Chiefs as their royal dress. They were made out of a dye taken from a sea animal and was considered a trade secret of Thyatirian community of traders. Trade guilds in such a situation was part of a pagan cult. This was necessary to ensure unity of the separate guilds as a family. They met for worship, discussed trade matters and it was then followed with a business dinner. These dinners were appended by ritual orgies. These orgies included ritual fornication believed to effect better understanding between the members of the guild. It also ensured that the absolute mystery and the trade secrets be contained within the members of the guild.

In Acts 16:14 we hear about Lydia the purple cloth seller from Thyatira.

Acts 16:12 From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

Acts 16:13 On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

Acts 16:14 One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

Acts 16:15 When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home.

Lydia is mentioned as a worshiper of God amidst a pagan world. God used her as the nucleus of a Church in Thyatira. Her home was the first church in Thyatira. In this city there was a church. The church grew. But they had pressure from their guilds. Not to join a guild was simply committing business suicide. You will be probably thrown out of business. Under such pressures church members were forced to take part in these guild meetings. All concerned knew the spiritual implications of these, but either justified it, theologized it or plain disregarded it. They simply compensated it by generous contributions and donations to religious matters so that God will wink His eye in some other direction.

Jesus introduces himself as "... the Son of God ..." (2:18). The Son of Man who speaks to them is the Son of God. They are reminded of the deity of their Lord, and their own new relationship as adopted sons of God. Their new relationship as sons brought with them new responsibilities and changes in behavior. So Jesus points out his eyes like burning fire which can see through outer coverings. He burns out the facade and sees our nakedness. There is nothing hidden from him. Sure enough they had their justifications as social pressure. Tertullian one of the Ante-Nicene fathers preached against such pitfalls. A Christian will have to face the world. He has to live in this world which is not conducive to Holy living. The problem today is just the same as it was then. But the Christian answer is "not to conform, but to transform" The Son has feet like burnished bronze. The feet, portraying movement and moral stand, are strong, sure and beautiful (Rom. 10:15). The Son's feet are consistent with the Son's eyes. The feet move in accordance to the eyes' discernment. The Thyatirans, as adopted sons of God (Gal. 3:26; 4:1 ff.), stand firm in their new found position as sons of God. They should move as sons of God, firmly and decisively in the right direction. Holy relationship ("Son of God") should result in holy actions.

Jesus accepts the work, the love, the faith, their ministry and patience (v.19) They were very commendable. But there was this - Jezebel (v.20) Apparently in the church there was a very important and influential lady who called herself as a prophetess who encouraged the church members to go along with the social culture. She justified the practice of fornication, idol worship and eating of meat sacrificed to the idols (v.21). Sexual involvement is a form of worship in all heathen religions. In most sophisticated religions they appear in a more sublimated form either as fertility worship (as in Siva Linga) or as mother worship (as in Mariolatory). Priestesses (Deva Dasees) of temple were ritual prostitutes. They were the unifying force in the community. They provided universal love. Most people who became Christians in Thyatira still held this appealing aspect. In Christianity also sex is a worship as an image of relation between Jesus and his Church with absolute fidelity between one man and one woman. It is a foretaste of Heaven on earth. It is therefore tempting to theologize and say it provides love to all. When some inspired prophetess encourages and delivers it as a means of God-realization, it is not surprising that most people went along.

The prophetess teaches and seduces.

Most people think that this lady - called here as Jezebel - was the wife of the elder in Thyatira. So she not only taught but actively seduced the church members into it. To make church as the guild will be a solution. Won't it? It is, but then it behaves differently.

Historically Jezebel was the Queen of King Ahab. In the time of Elijah, Israel knew Jezebel as the Sidonian idol-worshipper married to the wicked king Ahab. Functioning like a prophetess, she had taught idolatry to Israel while murdering the prophets of God and inspiring her husband to evil. She was the greatest of all Baal worshippers. Her story can be found in 1 Kings 16:31 - 33 and in detail in chapters 18-21 and in 2 Kings 9. The entire Israel (except 400 men of faith) followed her evil ways. The punishment of God for that was severe. All those who professed Baal were killed within the temple of Baal and Jezebel herself was thrown down and eaten by her own wild dogs. A similar punishment is pronounced in Rev. 2:22-23. We do not have any historical documents to the execution of the verdict of Jesus. But we should not be surprised if an disease similar to the AIDS or venereal diseases to have took up the order. It is a natural consequence of sin that it breeds death. For the wages of sin is death.

The name Jezebel as given in Old Testament means "where you reside". The implication here is to the doctrine of friendship with the world which is the strongest weapon of Satan to corrupt the church. A little variation of love, of sex of joy, of pleasure; a misplaced emphasis, that is all what is required to give a totally variant heresy. The historic Jezebel was doing the same thing. As Baal worship was part of the agricultural form of living in Canaan, so was the Thyrian Prophetess teaching in a community of feudal guilds. In our times, the community is different. We are essentially a capitalistic society centered in selfishness where values are measured in terms of money. To be successful in business requires other forms of tolerance and compromises. What are they in your church, in your community? Are there practices that are immoral, which are contradictory to holy living? Do we condone them on the basis of social necessity? Do we claim the freedom in Christ to cover them up?

In this church Nicolaitanism is not mentioned by name. But evidently the theme is the same. It has become so ingrained in the church that it is no more referred to by that heretic name. Instead it is called the "deep things", the great mystery unfathomable by reasoning, that can only be experienced. - "the deep things of Satan" under the leadership of a prophetess.

Dispensationaly this church period refers to the Church Age or papacy

Period starting from around AD 350 and lasted for over 1200 years. Incidentally Jesus writes this longest letter to this church indicating its length. It was painted by Our Lord in the Parable of the Leaven in Matthew 13:33.

The woman here refers to Jezebel who hides the leaven in the divine church (three measures of meal) until all of was leavened. The history of the period is truly a replica of the rule of Ahab and Jezebel filled with corruption of doctrines, introduction of pagan rites and rituals, idol worship and particularly Madona worship. There were feuds and wars within the church over power and authority.

Under these difficult times Jesus demand only a light burden from those who "have not the teaching", viz. "Hold fast to that which you have." Till he comes with power and glory.

To the overcomers he promises authority over the nations. Verse 27 refers to the quality control supervisors of the pottery guild, who sounded each pot for quality. He will gently strike the pot to generate a vibration. If the vibrations did not produce a high pitched note showing that the construction was perfect, it was shattered to pieces with a shattering blow. An iron rod was used for this purpose. The picture of the authority over the nations is a total authority to destroy that which are found unworthy. The authority is over the nations, which evidently is on the earth. This therefore would simply imply the dictatorial rule of Jesus during the millennial period when these overcomers are given authority.

The verse 28 is probably the most difficult verse for interpreters. The word " morning star" occurs only five times in the bible and that is in the books of revelations, Isiah, Job and Peter.

(Isa 14:12 NIV) How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!

This is assumed to be referring to the fall of the Archangel who became the Satan. This archangel evidently was a morning star from where he was thrown down to earth. He was ruling the nations of the earth.

(2 Pet 1:19 NIV) And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Here Peter is referring to the written word of God as guide until the ultimate realization of Jesus in our hearts occurs. This looks forward to the time when we will be like Jesus. Evidently morning star here refers to Jesus

(Rev 22:16 NIV) "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

This verse clearly identifies Jesus as the *bright* Morning Star. Notice the adjective bright added.

(Job 3:9 NIV) May its morning stars become dark; may it wait for daylight in vain and not see the first rays of dawn,

(Job 38:7 NIV) while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?

Taking the evidence of these two verses we have to guess a hierarchy of creatures at the time of the creation of earth as the Morning Stars and the Sons of God. We have no clear description of these creatures. But evidently among the Morning Stars Jesus has the preeminence as the Bright Morning Star.

Why is Jesus referred to as the Bright Morning Star. We need to look into the meaning of the word which literally means "that which is strewn at the dawn or the beginning." Thus Jesus being the creator - which John boldly proclaimed

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:2 He was with God in the beginning.

John 1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Jesus therefore is the Bright Morning Star who created all Morning Star. Just as he identified with mankind to be the First Born of New Creation Man, he also identified himself to be the First Born of all creations - in this case with the Morning Stars. As he is the Son of Man so he is also the Bright Morning Star. So also he is the Son of God among the Sons of God. We see the beautiful picture of a God who identifies himself with his creatures though he is the creator of all things. Not only that Yhvh is transcend, but he is also immanent in his own creation.

Thus

(Rev 2:28 NIV) I will also give him the morning star, - is a promise of inheritance in the new creation. Does it mean they will be placed in a morning star? Not only they will reign with Jesus through the millennium, but they will be amply rewarded.

Dispensationally this message is for the Church State Period, when Papacy was in its zenith. This period is often referred to in History as the Dark Ages. Jesus promises them a Morning Star which evidently came upon the church with the opening up of the Word of God and the renewal of the Holy Spirit during the Reformation period which followed.

Under these tense situations Jesus demands them to hold fast to what little they have. A fuller freedom and breakthrough of the Holy spirit is promised to History leading to Renaissance and Reformation.

Chapter Seven

SARDIS

Rev. 3:1-6

Rev 3:1 And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead.

Rev 3:2 Be thou watchful, and establish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine perfected before my God.

Rev 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep *it*, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Rev 3:4 But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.

Rev 3:5 He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Rev 3:6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Sardis was a city 30 miles from Thyatira situated on the mountain cliff of Timolus. It was built in BC 500 and was probably one of the first affluent cities of the world. It was impregnable because of its position, self sufficient with respect to food and water and other resources. It was approachable only from one side by a single road. Like Jerusalem, Sardis could have boasted that with only the lame and the infirm could defend the city.

2 Sam 5:6 The Jebusites said to David, "You will not get in here; even the blind and the lame can ward you off." They thought, "David cannot get in here." (2 Sam 5:7 Nevertheless, David captured the fortress of Zion, the City of David)

Nevertheless the city was taken twice once in BC 449 and then in BC 218. In both cases the procedure was the same. In both cases the helmet of one of the soldiers fell down the cliff side. As he took his path down to extricate it, the enemies watched. In the night they traced the footholds in single file and entered the city. The sentries were surprised by the attack and the city fell without a fight. They were confident and therefore careless.

Rev 3:2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die,

It was rich. Therefore an affluent society living in absolute luxury lived there. Being business people, it was here the first minted coins were used in trade. The mountain area was an earthquake zone. When it was destroyed by an earthquake it was rebuilt within eighteen months in more (then) modern design and architecture, much more sophisticated and planned without any external aid. Such was the wealth of the people.

In this city was a church following the labors of John. They had beautiful cathedrals and rich treasures. The churches were always full and they were always doing things for God. They had wonderful expensive projects which probably included uplifting of the poor and the needy - orphanages and rehabilitation centers and what not.

I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

They had a form of godliness, not the power. They worshipped God, but the spirit was missing.

Mat 15:8-9 "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Mat 15:9 They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men."

They professed to be Christians but lacked Christ. The nature of the society invariably was reflected in the church. Where there is no want, you may fail to rely on God in your daily life. This is why the Israel was given one days bread a day and not more. An affluent church is seldom called in for affirmation. They had it easy and they were careless. Therefore the fall was inevitable.

Dispensationally this reverts to the Reformation Churches. As soon as the great waves of reformation were over, the church found itself in cozy situation and the spirit was lost. They did a lot of reorganization, rectification and renaming but went no further.

for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.

Like the city of Sardis, the church became careless and fell victims to the enemies due to sheer carelessness. The rise of Higher Criticism in 1800s assisted by the rationalistic movements of the period and the Newtonian Mechanistic view of law based universe led to the collapse of faith. Kant, Hegel, Kirkegaard, Marx, Freud and Lenin were only the outgrowth of this social situation. In the face of these strong rationalistic and critical outbursts church shrank back to emphasize social reforms and outward work to the utter neglect of essential gospel of Jesus. The word "Sardis" means "escaping" or "that which remains".

There was no justification for the Sardis Church for their lack of witnessing because they heard and received the full revelation. Reformation was complete. They had the full Word of God in everyone's hand. Jesus refers to this church age in the parable of the hidden treasure. Through the mighty power of the Holy Spirit the church was given the full hidden treasures of salvation full and free. They have received it with joy. So Jesus asks them

Rev 3:3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.

To those lost their faith he has only one advise - repent.

The normal result of watching the church is that the enemy will fall upon them when they are least expected. That is what happened to the church in the reformation period. But Jesus says:

But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

The same idea of watching is explained in the parable: Mark 13:32-37

Fortunately there were people who kept the fire going even in these situations. One specialty of Sardis was its white fur coats - the symbol of aristocracy. Jesus refers to this symbol of wealth and glory in verse 4

Rev 3:4 Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.

White evidently represents purity and undefilement. The book of life referred to earlier in the bible in Philippians 4:3.

However it is implied even in the Old Testament when Moses speak to God on behalf of his fallen people.

Exo 32:32-33 But now, please forgive their sin--but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written." Exo 32:33 The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book.

In this passage God clearly defines the conditions under which He will blot the name out of the book of Life. More detailed reference to the Book of Life is made in various places in the book of Revelations at the time of White Throne Judgement. It is often referred to as "the lamb's book of life". The implication is thus that it contains the names of those who have attained the citizenship of the Kingdom of God. As in Rome of John's period, these citizens were not liable to normal code of procedures as applicable to non-Roman citizens. (This is in contrast to the Law of the United States where the code of procedures in case of crime is the same). The people whose names are written in the book of Life do not stand in judgement before the white throne.

Rom 8:1-2 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, Rom 8:2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Whatever be their other basic qualifications for the citizenship to the Kingdom, for those in Sardis, the fact that they kept themselves from the Jezebelian fornication was sufficient. They shall walk with Christ - in the stola, the white robes of justification, and adoption, and comfort, or in the white robes of honor and glory in the other world. Jesus promises them that He will acknowledge them before the Father as a member of the Church - as his bride.

Chapter Eight

PHILADELPHIA

Rev. 3 : 7 – 13

Rev 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and none shall shut, and that shutteth and none openeth:

Rev 3:8 I know thy works (behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name.

Rev 3:9 Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Rev 3:10 Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that *hour* which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Rev 3:11 I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown.

Rev 3:12 He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name.

Rev 3:13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Philadelphia means "Brotherly Love". This city was built by Attilus who built it in memory of his brother. It was the gateway to the Exotic East as far as the West was concerned. Attilus built it to spread his religion to all the world. Thus Philadelphia was built as a missionary city for the Pagan religion. Its major exports were Wine and the religion of the wine god Dionysius. We could write under major exports column: Spirit and spirit. Down the main streets of the city were a series of pillars with the names of eminent citizens along with the name of Emperor who honored them. It was common practice for the city as a form of citation for the citizens who contributed to the society. It is this practice that is referred to in verse 11. The city itself was in the volcanic zone and always under constant threat of destruction. Its soil was black soil, which was ideal for growing grapes - a contribution of the volcanic mountains. Incessantly the walls of the houses are cracked, different parts of the city being thus affected at different times. For this reason few people live in the city, and most of them spend their lives as farmers in the country. The city was very wealthy and excavations indicates that the houses in the city had running hot and cold water. The hot water was piped from hot water springs which abounded in the volcanic mountain area. It is believed that Christians came in this area in a humanitarian mission to help the victims of volcanic destruction and won the city. Recent excavations have uncovered a small Byzantine church, an acropolis, a synagogue and long stretches of Royal Road with large columns on either side. Famous residents of the area include King Midas and Aesop.

who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

The Key of David

The Key of David mentioned here is a direct reference to Isaiah's prophecy:

Isa 22:20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah:

Isa 22:21 and I will cloth him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.

Isa 22:22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

That is a reference to an incident recorded in the 22nd chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah. In the days of Hezekiah the king there was a courtier whose name was Shebna. He had been caught in a personal scam and as a result God says "I will take him and whirl him around and around ,

and hurl him into a far country." It was a prediction that he would be sent into Babylon. He would be replaced by a man named Eliakim, of whom God said, "I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David. What he opens, no one can shut, and what he shuts, no one can open." Eliakim was one of Jesus' ancestors. Eliakim is otherwise not referred to in any other historical context. Evidently this refers to Jesus' role in the salvation. Jesus is the door. As the Son of David he holds the keys for mankind.

This key is Philadelphia - Brotherly love. It led Jesus to the Cross. "There is no greater love than this - that a man lays down his life for his brethren." What then is this Key. It can be none other than the blood of Calvary. There is no other way. There is no other door.

Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

John 10:7 Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. John 10:9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.

In contrast to this we have the statement in revelation:

Never again will he leave it.

This has been interpreted by reincarnationalists as a proof of reincarnation. In a sense all Christians believe in reincarnation. At the second coming of Jesus all men will be "reincarnated" or resurrected to enter into fellowship with God or to be away from God. It is this privilege of being with Jesus eternally is referred to here by never leaving it. Those who lived unrighteously, and those who willfully rejected the offer of salvation through Jesus, who refused to walk through the door into the new life, will they ever have another opportunity to salvation? Bible never deals with that problem and we will never be able to answer that problem. The reason is simply that the Bible is written for mankind in history. It does not even describe heaven. It only indicates in terms of impossible human terms. It does not describe hell. It only indicates in terms of impossible human terms. Bible consistently refused to describe anything beyond human history. It is simply beyond the scope of revelation and beyond the scope of human understanding. And I believe that was intentional.

It refers back into the condition of Philadelphia city where people lived mostly outside the city for fear of earthquakes. Now Jesus says they will never leave the city for fear. This city is founded on solid ground and cannot be shaken. This is the ultimate refuge.

Jesus says that he 'shuts and no one opens'. The door to salvation is now open. This is the Key of David that has opened this doorway. But it will be soon shut. Dispensationally at the close of this Church age, the door will be shut and no one will be able to enter in through the door of grace. Period of Grace is going to be shut.

Mat 25:10 "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Mat 25:11 "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' Mat 25:12 "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' Mat 25:13 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Jesus will come for his bride - the waiting church and then the door will be shut.

This reference to the closing of the door is one strong argument for the pretribulation rapture of the church which will take place at the close of the Philadelphia Church Age. This is supported strongly by the verses that follows it.

Rev 3:9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars--I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.

The excavations I have mentioned earlier indicates a synagogue and a church in close proximity. Christians were considered as a cult and heresy within the Jewish religion. Jews had a special status within the Roman Empire where they were exempt from worshipping the Idol of Caesar. Now they had a rival in Christian faith. Christians consistently refused to pay homage to the idols. This has led to a lot a betrayal and rivalry between the two faiths. It was not uncommon for Jews to betray their fellow Jews in Christ as a heretic who were then led to the lions and coliseums as sport objects. It is this Jesus referring to in this passage. Jesus gives the Church the authority and status to sit with him on the throne at the White Throne where Jewish will acknowledge that the Church is the bride of the Christ.

Rev 3:10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

This is a clear reference to fact that those who are victorious in the Philadelphia Church Era will be kept from the trial - the great tribulation- that is going to come upon the whole world. This verse then indicates that the rapture of the church is place between the Philadelphia and

Laodecian Church Era. The sequence of the thought patter is evidently of Jesus' second coming and of the rapture which is preceded by the great tribulation. Soon after that comes the Great White Throne where the Church Raptured and made perfect shares in the glory of Jesus.

Rev 3:11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

Notice the reference to the crown which necessarily refers to the position of Church raptured.

Rev 3:8 I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.

The open door

Revelation 4:1 At this point I had another vision and saw an open door in heaven. [proceeds to tell vision of heavenly thrones and creatures worshipping God.]

John 10:7-8, I am the gate for the sheep. Whoever comes in by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture."

Philadelphia being at the cross roads of east and west was an opportunity of witnessing through their contacts and hospitality to many who passed that way. An open house of love for those who pass by is a sure way of expressing your love and hence convincing way of Christian expression and evangelization. Jesus within their hearts, each believer becomes a door - a means of salvation for others. These doors will be taken away once the rapture has taken place.

Dispensationally this modern era has found tremendous missionary movements which is the necessary condition for the end of the ages. All men may have a fair opportunity to hear the word so that when judging he may be fair. Mission fields are getting opened in unreachable areas. But time is close when it will be shut and a new period of dispensation will usher in.

From phileo, to love and adelphos, brother.

1 Peter 1:22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, (philadelphia) fervently love one another from the heart,

2 Peter 1:5-7 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, (philadelphia) and in your brotherly kindness, love.

Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; (philadelphia) give preference to one another in honor;

1 Thessalonians 4:9 Now as to the love of the brethren, (philadelphia) you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

Hebrews 13:1 Let the love of the brethren (philadelphia) continue.

John 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Contrast this with another love Philarguria - the love of silver . (phileo= to love ; arguros= silver)

While Philadelphia brings heaven down to earth Philarguria brings hell.

1 Timothy 6:5-10 and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

1 Tim 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Now he tells the church, beginning in verse 8, how he will use this power to open and shut. All missionary activities are directed by Jesus himself through the Holy Spirit. We have several examples of these in the Acts of Apostles.

On his second missionary journey he tried to go into the province of Asia to preach the gospel but was forbidden by the Holy Spirit; it was a shut door. Then he tried to go into Bithynia, on the southern shore of the Black Sea, but was not allowed to go in - another shut door. But when he came to Troas he had a vision of a man from Macedonia, and he learned that the Lord had opened a door for him into Europe. .

Three Names

I will write on him the name of my God

and

the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God;

and

I will also write on him my new name.

This again refers to the Pillars that are found in the Philadelphian High ways where the emperor honored the citizens for their great services. On it were written the Emperors name in large letters, then the name of the city and then the name of the citizen who is honored. Often he is given a new title. Christians of course were a group with very little power. But comforts them by saying that his honoring will be far more greater than those writings on the pillars. You will become a pillar which will eternally standing. When a person is born again he becomes a new creation and Jesus gives him a new name.

Chapter Nine

LAODECIA

Rev. 3:14-22

Rev 3:14 And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God:

Rev 3:15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

Rev 3:16 So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

Rev 3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked:

Rev 3:18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see.

Rev 3:19 As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Rev 3:21 He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne.

Rev 3:22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

The name Laodikeia comes from two words Lao=people and decia = justice.. So Laodicea means = "justice for the people" It was founded by Antiochus II between 260 and 246 BC, and was named in honor of his wife, Laodice. But Laodice afterwards poisoned Antiochus. This is the same Antiochus who formed the marriage league with Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, in fulfillment of Daniel 11:6.

The city was located about forty miles southeast of Philadelphia and one hundred miles east of Ephesus. Situated on the river Lycus not far from Colosse it was surrounded by rich farming area which provided for the city in abundance. But its importance comes from its position. Laodicea was on the crossroads between the important Ionian cities of that time. This produced a vigorous trade center and a banking capital. As a result people became very wealthy. Laodicea was mostly populated with Syrians and Jews transported from Babylon. Jews like their counter parts elsewhere in the world - because of their hard work and cleverness - controlled most of the trade and commerce in the city. It is assessed that there were over 7,500 Jewish families at the time this letter was written. Cicero is known to have lived in this city around 50 BC. In AD 60 an earthquake destroyed the city and the citizens were able to rebuild it without the help of Rome. In AD 66 the city was destroyed by another earthquake and was rebuilt by Marcus Aurelius.

Laodicea was the headquarters of medical practices of that period. Siting on a volcanic mountainside the city had a number of hot, cold, and lukewarm springs. Most of these waters contained large number of minerals and was supposed have healing properties. These provided the rich with a series of health resorts which were supervised by a leading physician. Thousands of sick people journeyed to Laodicea to these spas to benefit from the medical treatments offered by the physicians, the eye salve, the mineral water, and the hot and lukewarm springs. Although the water was pleasing to the body, it was nauseating to drink.

In this rich city was a rich Christian Church.

Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

Jesus introduces himself to this church with three epithets.

Amen - The ultimate realization of all promises of God to mankind.

John 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

What Jesus is saying is that he will come back to give to each person the justice that is merited - Laodemia. This is emphasized in the second epithet of faithful and true witness.

Jesus is faithful but he is the witness to all men. It is the rejection or acceptance of Jesus that ultimately decided everyone's fate. He is also the Ruler of all God's creation.

He is the judge because all authority in heaven and earth are given to Jesus.

Mat 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

John 5:22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,

Rev 3:15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!

Rev 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

Laodician Church was a luke warm Church. But they did do a lot of good works. They were active in social uplifting and community projects etc. They expected to be justified by their works apart from Jesus. The cross was missing. They knew of the lukewarm springs which were nauseating to drink. Like those waters Jesus says he will have to spit them out - reject them out from his choice. In spiritual matters we need to make a choice. We cannot be neutral. You must either reject or accept the demands of Jesus. There are only two classes of people. Those who are saved and those who are not saved. There is no purgatory business here. The lukewarmness of the churches around the world is the result of well-being. They feel no necessity. Growth always comes through conflict in a sinful world. This is why Adam was given the blessing upon the fall

Gen 3:18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

Gen 3:19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Only in an unfallen state can conflict be eliminated without harm. Until then every man have this choice which he should make.

Rev 3:17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

Jesus talking to the rich Laodicians in their own terms. They were proud of their riches and great acquisitions. Such prosperity develops an antipathy to spiritual matters.

Deu 8:17 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."

Deu 8:18 But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

Deu 8:19 If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed.

Deu 8:20 Like the nations the LORD destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.

Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

The city was also noted for the black cloth manufactured there from black wool produced in the valley. The wool was glossy black and of a soft texture almost like silk and famous throughout the whole region,. Black garments were almost universally worn by the Laodiceans and it symbolized their social status. They also wore gold ornaments. Christ advised the Christians of the city to buy of Him, "gold refined in the fire, and white clothes to wear". The people of Laodicea were familiar with the white toga worn by Roman citizens and officials. Only the Roman

citizens were privileged to wear this white garment and it was a high honor. It was symbol of victory and authority. They were the rulers. In the Bible white represents purity and righteousness. Jesus asks the Laodiceans to wear the imputed righteousness of Jesus so that they become victors and rulers of the earth. Come and be part of the King who is coming to judge.

We have elsewhere referred to the School of Medicine and Aesculapius. There were over two hundred Temples of Karu dedicated to Aesculapius, the Greek god of medicine. In this temple they made the famous Phygian eye salve, called collyrium. Jesus the Great Physician, prescribes to this the spiritually blind Laodiceans to buy eye salve from Him that they might have spiritual vision instead of the eye salve from the heather gods.

Rev 3:19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

In the midst of plenty and abundance Jesus says he will rebuke and discipline so that they may bring forth repentance. Rebuke and disciplining in the lives of Christians are meant to produce repentance and growth. This gives us the insight for one of the reasons for pain and suffering.

Heb 12:5-15 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline....

Rev 3:20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

Rev 3:21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

This famous verse is used to show that Jesus is knocking at the doors of human heart. So he is. Why is it that Jesus the ruler of all creation standing outside and knock. He is the ruler. He has all the authority over all his creations. But he will not impose his authority on man's heart. Every man is given freedom of choice. It is a freedom He has given at the time of creation. In spite of all the evil that has come out this freedom, God is not going to take it away. It is something God respects - even when it hurts to His core. God is not a tyrant, nor man a victim. The reality of the incarnation and the cross is the statement of this fact. Incarnation itself will be meaningless unless we understand this great truth. Jesus knocks at the heart. He will not open the door. The latch is given to man in the inside. If he opens it, Jesus promises to come in and have fellowship with him.

The consequence of this is that he gives the right to sit with Jesus on the throne.

Dispensationally this last Church represents the end time church which has gone apostate. They became powerful, wealthy and controlled the commerce. For it they have to become neither cold nor hot. They still hold on to the name. But they will never proclaim Jesus as Lord. Toleration of pagan religions and syncretism will be hallmark of this church. Everything is acceptable. At the end of this era is the white throne - the judgment seat of Jesus which will give justice to all men. Then the overcomers will be sitting with him on the throne. This again indicates rapture long before the white throne. Since this age has no commendation it is assumed that the real church has been raptured off sometime during or before this age. When the presence of the salt is missing decay is faster and inevitable. With no opposition to evil, it becomes predominant. Even during this time people do come to salvation by opening the door of their hearts.

Chapter Ten

THE SEVEN CHURCHES

A Study on the first three Chapters in Revelation

These seven letters we have examined follow a set pattern of writing. There are Seven Key Elements in each letter . They are:

1. The meaning of the name of the church being addressed;
2. The title of Jesus, the author of the letter, each chosen relevant to the message to that particular church;
3. The commendation of the Church- Their strong points and merits;
4. The reproof and rebuke of things they failed in;
5. The exhortation and counsel specific to the condition of the particular church; relevant to the geography and history of the city;
6. The promise to the "overcomer";
7. The concluding phrase, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

We can identify each of these churches with the ages of the church roughly. The beginning and the ends of each age is not sharp. They all overlap each other and each age continue to be with us all the time.

	The Meaning of Names	Titles that Jesus uses	Commendations	Reproof	Counsel	Promise to Overcomers	AGE
Ephesus	The Desired One: full purposed	Who He who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walk among the seven golden lampstands	deeds, hard work, perseverance, endured hardship, did not tolerate wicked men	forsaken their first love	be faithful to the point of death	Will not be hurt at all by the second death.	Ephesus Apostolic Period: sowing of the seeds till 100 AD
Smyrna:	Myrrh; Offering of Sacrifice	The First and the Last, who died and came back to life again.	through affliction and poverty did not leave faith		repent, otherwise I will come and fight against them	I will give some of the hidden manna, I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.	Smyrna: Persecution Period 90 – 325 AD
Pergamos	Much Married; Adulterous	Who has the sharp double-edged sword	among the satanists kept the faith and did not renounce faith	teaching of Balaam teaching of Nicolaitans	hold on to what you have until I come	I will give him the authority over the nations. I will give him the morning star	Pergamos State Church Period 325 – 590 AD Parable of Mustard Seed that grows into a tree

Thyatira	Sacrifice of Labor	Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.	deeds, love and faith, service and perseverance	tolerates Jezebel	Remember what you have received and heard; obey it and repent	They will walk with me , dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge him before my Father and his angels	Thyatira Period of Heresy 550 – 1600 AD Parable of the Leaven
Sardis	Remnant	Who holds seven spirits of God and the seven stars.	Deeds	Dead	Hold on to what you have	I will write on him the name of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down from heaven from my God; I will also write on him my new name.	Sardis Reformation Period 1570 – 1750 AD Parable of the Hidden Treasure
Philadelphia	Brotherly Love	Who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. One who opens the door which no one can shut.	deeds, kept the word, did not deny my name		buy from me gold refined in fire so you can be rich;and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your nakedness; and slave to put on your eyes so that you can see	I will give the right to sit with me on my throne.	Philadelphia Missionary Period AD 1750 - Parable of the Great Pearl
Laodicea	Justice to People; Judgment	Thee Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.	Deeds	Neither hot nor cold and is lukewarm	If you hremember your first love repent and do the things you did first	I will give the right to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.	Laodicea End time Apostate Church Period The Parable of the Drag Net